DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 742 EA 028 240

AUTHOR	Connard, Christie; And Others
TITLE	Working Respectfully with Families: A Practical Guide for Educators and Human Service Workers. Training Module IV: Home, School, and Community Partnerships.
INSTITUTION	Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
PUB DATE	Mar 96
NOTE	90p.; For the other modules, see EA 028 237-239. Overhead transparencies (replicated in document) are not included with ERIC copy.
AVAILABLE FROM	NWREL Document Reproduction Service, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204 ($40 each; $150 for set of 4 modules).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Caseworker Approach; Community Coordination; *Community Services; Elementary Secondary Education; *Family (Sociological Unit); *Family Needs; Family Programs; Human Services; *Integrated Services; *Social Services; Social Work; Workshops

ABSTRACT

Educators and service providers often have little opportunity to work cooperatively with families to enhance outcomes for children. This document is the fourth in a four-part training module that was developed by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Child, Family, and Community Program. The workshops are based on an ecological, family-centered approach to education and service delivery. The module, which presents the philosophical underpinnings of an ecological, strength-based approach, is used to train state cadres in Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, and Washington. The module contains a training outline with procedures, activities, overhead transparencies, handouts, key articles, and a paper entitled, "The Ecology of the Family: A Background Paper for a Family-Centered Approach to Education and Social Services Delivery." The third workshop focuses on the interdependence among the home, school, and community and helping those who work with children and families to understand that all families need help at some time in their lives. The workshop examines three strategies that enhance families' access to formal and informal support (family advocates, home visits, and parent centers) and presents a case study in which workshop participants identify family strengths, develop strategies to enhance formal and informal support, and come to understand the family's perspective. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 404 742

Working Respectfully with Families

A Practical Guide for Educators and Human Service Workers

Module IV: Home, School, and Community Partnerships

Christie Connard, Rebecca Novick, and Helen Nissani

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Kirkpatrick
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 028 240

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Working Respectfully with Families: A Practical Guide for Educators and Human Service Workers

Training Module IV

Home, School, and Community Partnerships

Christie Connard
Rebecca Novick
Helen Nissani

Child, Family, and Community Program
Helen Nissani, Director

March 1996

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

Welcome

Thank you for being a part of NWREL's *Working Respectfully with Families* training cadre. Your experience and expertise will assure the success of the workshops. As a result of your effective presentation, personnel from schools and social service agencies will be in better positions to work toward changing the way they work with and view families.

For the past five years, the Child, Family, and Community Program (CFC) of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) has studied the development of school-linked comprehensive services in the Pacific Northwest. CFC has consistently found that educators and social service providers find it highly challenging to form partnerships with families that are based on mutual respect and reciprocity. Professionals often found it difficult to recognize strengths in the families they served. Frequently, they viewed project activities as required, remedial interventions.

There is a tendency in our educational and social service delivery systems to view children in isolation from their families, and families in isolation from their community and larger society.

The primary goal of these workshops is to facilitate a change in attitude on the part of those who work with children and families. There is a tendency in our educational and social service delivery systems to view children in isolation from their families, and families in isolation from their community and larger society. In addition, families—especially families having difficulty supporting their children's education—are often seen as deficient and in need of remediation. Three key tenets of the family-centered approach are:

1. The child must be viewed from an ecological perspective—that is, in the context of the family, community, and larger society.
2. Rather than diagnosing and remediating "the problem," professionals form partnerships with families—sharing knowledge, building trust, and developing goals and action plans based on family strengths and values.

3. Both families and children need supportive environments for healthy development.

The activities in these workshops are designed to engage participants in a collaborative learning process that will both connect with participants' prior experience and be applicable to their work with families. We are sure that your skills as a group facilitator will help make the workshops a productive, enjoyable learning experience for all involved.

Introduction

Consider for a moment today's popular adages about schools and social service agencies: "Parents are their child's first and most important teacher." "If we want healthy communities, we need healthy families." "Effective teaching addresses the needs of the whole child." Now consider the reality—the fact that educators and service providers often have little opportunity to work cooperatively with families to enhance outcomes for children. The goal of this project is to assist educators and human service workers to form effective and supportive partnerships with each other and with the families they serve.

This four-part training module, *Working Respectfully with Families: A Practical Guide for Educators and Human Service Workers*, was developed by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Child, Family, and Community Program. The modules are based on an ecological, family-centered approach to education and service delivery. This approach represents an integration of research and theory from developmental psychology and sociology, with experiential knowledge from social work, family support, early intervention, and early childhood education. Each workshop explores practical approaches to developing relationships with families, building the community environment, and linking families with community support. The training sessions include the following workshops:

The goal of this project is to assist educators and human service workers to form effective and supportive partnerships with each other and with the families they serve.

I. The Child, the Family, and the Community

II. Developing Partnerships with Families

III. Creating Family-Friendly Schools

IV. Home, School, and Community Partnerships

Working Respectfully with Families will be used to train state cadres in each of five Northwest states: Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, and

Washington. The cadres will be composed of administrators, social service personnel, teachers, and others who work with families. They, in turn, will offer trainings to schools and social service agencies in their states.

Each module contains a training outline with procedures, activities, overhead masters, handouts, and key articles. The paper, "The Ecology of the Family: A Background Paper for a Family-Centered Approach to Education and Social Services Delivery," is also provided. It synthesizes research and theoretical information on the ecological perspective. Participants should read this paper prior to the first workshop. Presenters should be familiar with the content of the background paper before planning and implementing the workshop.

The first workshop, The Child, the Family, and the Community, presents the philosophical underpinnings of an ecological, strength-based approach; the next three workshops explore the practical applications for this approach. Because it is essential that participants are grounded in the research and theories that are the basis of a family-centered approach, the first workshop is a prerequisite for the next three. Interested persons may attend all four workshops or a combination of the first workshop and any other workshop(s).

Overview of Workshop IV

Home, School, and Community Partnerships

In our society, the image of the isolated individual (self-sufficient, autonomous, and independent) pulling himself up by his bootstraps is deeply embedded in our cultural values. Independence is seen as a strength, whereas interdependence is seen as a weakness.

In contrast, the family-centered approach is based on the interdependence of the home, the school, and the community. The central thesis of this workshop is: If we want strong communities, we need strong families; and if we want strong families, we need strong communities.

If we want strong communities, we need strong families; and if we want strong families, we need strong communities.

A corollary of this assumption is that all families need help at some time in their lives. Participants are asked to explore the concepts of formal and informal support, using their own experience to enhance understanding. Three strategies that schools have successfully used to enhance families' access to formal and informal support (family advocates, home visits, and parent centers) are examined.

In this workshop, we also revisit Mrs. Hamachek, whose story was first detailed in Workshop I. By analyzing Mrs. Hamachek's story for the second time, participants are encouraged to "put it all together," to use their own experience and the information presented in all of the workshops to identify strategies to support the family in a respectful manner. Participants will identify strengths, develop strategies to enhance formal and informal support, and, above all, come to appreciate and understand the family's perspective.

Home, School, and Community Partnerships

Contents and Time Frame

I.	**INTRODUCTION**	30 minutes
	A. Practice and Applications	
	B. Icebreaker	
	C. A Family-Centered Approach: Process and Content	
II.	**THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT SYSTEM**	90 minutes
	A. The Community Support Net	
	B. Informal Support	
	C. Identifying Informal Support	
	D. Formal Support	
	E. Strategies to Increase Formal and Informal Support	
III.	**FAMILY STORY**	40 minutes
IV.	**WRAP-UP**	5 minutes

Home, School, and Community Partnerships

Materials

Required Reading

"The Ecology of the Family: A Background Paper for a Family-Centered Approach to Service Integration," by Christie Connard

Overheads

WIV-O1. Garbarino Quote

WIV-O2. A Family-Centered Approach

WIV-O3. Community Systems

WIV-O4. Benefits of Informal Support

WIV-O5. Your Informal Support Systems

WIV-O6. Coontz Quote

WIV-O7. Environments, Relationships, and Linkages

Handouts

WIV-H1. A Family-Centered Approach

WIV-H2. Community Systems

WIV-H3. Benefits of Informal Support

WIV-H4. Family Advocate

WIV-H5. Home Visits

WIV-H6. Parent Centers

WIV-H7. Family Story

WIV-H8. Family Story: Questions to Address

WIV-H9. Coontz Quote

WIV-H10. Environments, Relationships, and Linkages

Participant Packet

1. Background paper: "The Ecology of the Family: A Background Paper for a Family-Centered Approach to Education and Social Service Delivery"
2. Articles
3. Handouts
4. Description and Objectives of the Workshop
5. Sample Agenda

Key Articles for Workshop IV

Ash, C. (1994). Changing the way school do business: The Comer Model and accelerated schools. *Family Resource Coalition*, 13(1 & 2).

Bruner, C. (1994). Building bridges: Supporting families across service systems. *Family Resource Coalition*, 13(1 & 2).

Calvin and Hobbes Collaborate.

Kunish, L.G. & Farley, J. (1994). Collaboration; The prerequisite for school readiness and success. ERIC DIGEST. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

National Association of State Boards of Education. (1991). *Caring communities: Supporting young children and their families.*

National Center for Children in Poverty. (1995). Number of poor children under six increased from 5 to 6 million 1989-1992, 5(1).

School-linked family support gets a big boost: Authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act.

Trujillo, L. (1993). Learning from the Denver Family Resource Schools; The model and the process. *Family Resource Coalition Report*, 3(3 & 4).

Usdan, M. (1994). Collaboration: A new leadership dimension. *Principal*, November.

Home, School, and Community Partnerships

About this Workshop

This three-hour workshop is the last of four workshops on a family-centered approach to service delivery. This workshop focuses on how to strengthen families by building partnerships among the home, the school, and the community. Three approaches that schools have used to increase families' access to both formal and informal support are discussed: parent centers, family advocates, and home visits.

An ecological model synthesizing the current research is presented as the basis for a new way to deliver services to families. "The Ecology of the Family: A Background Paper for a Family-Centered Approach to Education and Social Service Delivery" contains a detailed description of the ecological model. Participants should read this paper before attending the workshop.

Workshop Objectives

As a result of this training, participants will:

1. **Understand some of the assumptions of our current service delivery system and compare and contrast this system with a family-centered approach.**
2. **Increase their understanding of the needs of all families for both formal and informal support.**
3. **Identify strategies to increase a family's formal and informal support system.**

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Home, School, and Community Partnerships

Training Outline

I. INTRODUCTION 30 minutes

Purpose: *To provide an overview and orient participants to content and expectations of the workshop.*

Directions to Presenters

1. Introduce yourself and others.
2. Review any housekeeping information such as rest rooms, parking validation, nearest coffee shops; and ground rules such as raising your hand or talking freely.
3. Go over the agenda topics and training objectives.

A. Practice and Applications

Purpose: *To connect the content of Workshops I, II, or III with the current workshop and to provide participants an opportunity to discuss their experience in applying concepts in their personal and work contexts.*

Directions to Presenters

1. Ask participants to share with a partner their experience with the homework from the previous workshop.
   - **Homework from Workshop I.** Ask participants to go back to their school, home, or agency and practice a family-centered, strength-based approach with at least one family or person, and/or try to identify situations where this approach might work. Are there systemic or other barriers to using this approach?
   - **Homework from Workshop II.** Ask participants to 1) practice identifying strengths in people and families; 2) to identify examples of medical model and ecological model situations and approaches; 3) think of a time when they needed support. What support did they have? What was helpful, not helpful, and why?
   - **Homework from Workshop III.** Using the Family-Friendly School Guidelines, rate your school or agency in partnership with your PTA or parent advisory group.

2. Ask for responses.
3. Discuss.

B. Icebreaker

Purpose: *To begin to understand some of our cultural beliefs about supporting families.*

Directions to Presenter

1. Say: "Workshop I discussed families as needing support just as children do."

WIV-O1

2. Place **Overhead WIV-O1** on the overhead (Garbarino Quote).
3. Read the quote: "The community is parent to the family."
4. Ask the group the following questions:
   - What do you think he means by this?
   - What roles do communities play in families' development?
   - What attitudes make it hard for many of us to accept such statements as the one by Garbarino and the popular adage, "It takes a whole village to raise a child?"
5. Ask participants to discuss this statement with a partner.
6. Share and chart responses.

Key Points

- In our society, the image of the isolated individual (self-sufficient, autonomous, and independent), pulling himself up by his bootstraps, is deeply embedded in our cultural values. Independence is seen as a strength whereas interdependence is seen as a weakness.
- Our social service delivery system tends to be based on a medical model, in which great efforts are expended to discover, diagnose, and label the problem, which is perceived as residing in individuals.
- A family-centered approach is a systems approach—social, interpretative, and relational, rather than individualistic and objective.
- Both families and children need supportive environments for healthy development.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

C. A Family-Centered Approach: Process and Content

Purpose: *To briefly review the concepts of a family-centered approach.*

Directions to Presenter

WIV-H1 **WIV-O2**

1. Place **Overhead WIV-O2** on the overhead (A Family-Centered Approach).
2. Refer participants to **Handout WIV-H1** (same as overhead).
3. Remind participants of Workshop I and briefly review the following points:

Key Points

- A family-centered approach is a process for delivering services to families that will fit any content.
- The elements of the process include environments, relationships, and linkages.
- A family-centered approach is not a set of practices but a way of doing business, or a "philosophy" in which families are recognized as having unique concerns, strengths, and values.
- A truly family-centered approach shapes all aspects of how a program is planned and implemented. The family-centered modules are about how this philosophy can be implemented across programs.

II. THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT SYSTEM 90 minutes

Purpose: *To increase understanding of the needs of all families for both formal and informal support.*

A. The Community Support Net

Purpose: *To visualize the community support net and to understand that all families benefit from support.*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Directions to Presenters

WIV-H2 **WIV-O3**

1. Place **Overhead WIV-O3** on the overhead (Community Systems).
2. Refer participants to **Handout WIV-H2** (same as overhead).
3. Indicate to the participants that the net metaphor is used here.
4. Discuss and clarify.

Key Point

- **A community support net is made of different "strands"—informal support and formal support represented here by the different circles.**

Directions to Presenters

1. Bring out a baby, lying happily in a tightly woven net.
2. Discuss the net metaphor.
3. Discuss and clarify, describing the family:

   This family has a strong support net. There is plenty of informal support. They are members of a mosque, they have a group of supportive friends and extended family. They get what is needed from the community. They have an adequate income from employment, they have comfortable housing, and they feel safe in their neighborhood. They know about and are known at their child's school. They participate in recreational activities in the community.

Directions to Presenters

1. Bring out a frayed net with a doll precariously lying inside.
2. Discuss and clarify, describing the family:

   "This is a different family. Mom is single, 17 years old, and is struggling to finish high school. She is living at home, but her family is openly disappointed with her decision to keep her baby. She feels isolated from her peers."

3. What supports might this family need to become healthy?
4. Chart responses.

5. Now bring out the net again with another doll precariously lying inside. Say:

> "It is not only poor teen parents who are having a hard time. Some middle-class families are also only a paycheck away from disaster. In this family, mom has been supporting the family with her job as a legal secretary while her husband finishes law school. They are heavily in debt. Although dad graduated in the top 10 percent of his class, he has been unable to find a job in his field. The only job he has found is in a city two hours away, working in a bookstore. They have a three-year-old and an infant. Adequate child care is a constant worry, as is making ends meet. Mom has little time for friends, let alone a moment for herself.

6. Ask the group: What supports might this family need to become healthy?

7. Chart responses.

8. Discuss.

Key Points

- **All families benefit from community support.**
- **All families need help at some time, but the kind and intensity of the support needed from the community varies from family to family.**
- **We know that some families have little or no social support system. Some families also lack basic resources.**
- **These two "at-risk" families need help in creating both formal and informal support.**
- **For these overburdened families to function and nurture their children, they would need additional lines of formal support from community organizations—perhaps AFDC, food stamps, job training, health care, and child care—to keep their level of functioning from "sagging" into negative outcomes.**

B. Informal Support

Purpose: *To discuss how families benefit from informal support.*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Directions to Presenters

WIV-H3 **WIV-O4**

1. Place **Overhead WIV-O4** on the overhead (Benefits of Informal Support).
2. Refer participants to **Handout WIV-H3** (same as overhead).
3. Discuss informal social support.

Key Points

- Each family creates its own set of relationships with the formal and informal support resources available within the community.
- A family's informal social resources grow naturally out of interactions with others through extended family, church and social groups, hobbies, or work.
- Informal support networks provide emotional support, guidance and feedback, and assistance. This support is often more available and culturally appropriate than support offered by formal support organizations.

C. Identifying Informal Support

Purpose: *To connect training content with participant's personal experience.*

Directions to Presenters

WIV-O5

1. Place **Overhead WIV-O5** on the overhead (Your Informal Support System).
2. Ask participants to take out a piece of paper and pencil and follow your direction:
   - Draw circles to match the overhead.
   - Write your initials in the center circle.
   - Write inside the five surrounding circles:
     a) companionship/fun
     b) intimate dialogue/emotional support
     c) advice and guidance
     d) tangible aid and services

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

e) contacts and connections to resources

3. Briefly explain what each of the outside circles means:
   - Companionship/fun—Who are people you play with?
   - Intimate dialogue/emotional support—Who do you go to when you need encouragement, reassurance, intimacy?
   - Advice and guidance—Who do you go to with problems?
   - Tangible aid and services—Who do you ask to fix the lawn mower, provide child care, help you move, provide occasional transportation?
   - Contacts and connections—Who do you ask when you want to find a resource in the community, to know who to call for soccer sign ups, or what specialist is good?
4. Ask participants to write the name or initials of people in their social network who do these things for them.
5. Encourage them to think of their different roles—worker/parent, committee member, churchgoer—as they do this.
6. After a few minutes, ask them to turn to a partner and discuss how their social network has helped them to be better parents. If they are not a parent, ask how they think social networks might help someone be a better parent.
7. Debrief by asking: Can you identify experiences or factors that might shape the social networks of the families you serve?

Key Points

- **When families are connected to support from the community, risk is reduced and strength is promoted.**
- **This workshop focuses on how to strengthen families by increasing their access to both formal and informal support.**

D. Formal Support

Purpose: *To discuss the importance of formal support.*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Directions to Presenter

WIV-O3

1. Place **Overhead WIV-O3** on the overhead again (Community Systems).
2. Ask the group: Which formal support systems do you usually access?
3. Ask participants to privately list the formal supports that they access.
4. Debrief by asking: Does your use of informal support influence your use of formal support? How? What formal supports are not considered stigmatizing in our society?
5. Chart responses.

Key Points

- In our society, there is no stigma attached to using some types of formal support, such as the home mortgage tax deduction, Social Security, employer-provided health care, pensions, and child care. However, people who use services such as AFDC, food stamps, Medicaid, and subsidized housing are stigmatized as deficient in some way.
- If you have little access to middle-class formal or informal supports, you may have no place else to turn. A community's formal support serves many functions, one of which is to support a family whose net may be sagging.
- Changes in the family system (working mothers, single-parent families) and in the economy (limited job opportunities and declining standard of living for the majority of Americans) are requiring the development of expanded child care and support for families who are struggling to provide for their families.
- If we want strong communities we need strong families. All families need formal and informal support.

E. Strategies to Increase Formal and Informal Support

Purpose: *To examine strategies that schools have successfully used to enhance a family's formal and informal support.*

Directions to Presenters

1. Introduce the activity by making this key point:

   A number of strategies have been used successfully by schools to help build parents' formal and informal support. Two are described in the article "Is Your School Family-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Friendly?" Descriptions of three strategies are provided in the handouts. They include parent centers, home visits, and use of a school-based family advocate.

2. Divide into groups of six to eight people.

WIV-H4, WIV-H5, WIV-H6

3. Give each group a summary of one family support strategy: **Handout WIV-H4** (Family Advocate); **Handout WIV-H5** (Home Visits); or **Handout WIV-H6** (Parent Centers).
4. Ask each group to assign a recorder and a presenter.
5. Ask groups to brainstorm the pros and cons of their strategy for enhancing both formal and informal support and record on chart pads.
6. Chart responses.

Key Points

- **Schools and service providers need to form partnerships with each other and with families to support families' health functioning. No one can do it alone.**
- **One of the key features of successful approaches is the idea of getting parents together and of parents helping other parents.**
- **We need to think about the importance of informal support and ways to help families enhance this type of support.**

III. FAMILY STORY 40 minutes

Purpose: *To have participants use the presented information and their own experience to identify strategies to increase the family's formal and informal support system, building on family strengths.*

Directions to Presenters

1. Form groups of six to eight people.

WIV-H7

2. Give each member of the group a copy of **Handout WIV-H7** (Family Story), chart paper, and marking pen.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3. Ask each group to identify a recorder, time keeper, and presenter.
4. Ask each group to identify strategies to increase the family's formal and informal support systems.

WIV-H8

5. Refer participants to **Handout WIV-H8** (Family Story: Questions to Address):
   - What are the strengths of this family?
   - What formal support does the family need? Informal support?
   - How can the school help to address the family's needs and/or refer them to other services?
   - What additional support does Gabe need?
   - What are your limitations in helping this family?
   - What might be the cost to society of providing the support Mrs. Hamachek needs to raise her children?
   - What might be the cost of society's not helping?
6. Debrief by asking each group to share ideas. Chart responses.

IV. WRAP-UP 5 minutes

Purpose: *To summarize the main points of the workshop.*

Directions to Presenter

1. Introduce the summary of the day's activities by saying; "Sometimes we become overwhelmed when we realize the risks that many children and families face in today's world. The following quote may be encouraging."

WIV-H9 **WIV-O6**

2. Place **Overhead WIV-O6** on the overhead (Coontz Quote).
3. Refer participants to **Handout WIV-H9** (same as overhead).

> Schools, social programs, and caring individuals can compensate for stressful environments and troubled families. When you read the histories of children from impoverished neighborhoods, the first thing that strikes you is the stunning number of obstacles they face—the hundreds of tiny curves where it's possible to fall off a tightrope much higher and narrower than any path that more privileged children have

to tread. But the second realization you have is how small the difference between success and failure can be. A third realization is how important it is to be respectful of the strengths and knowledge that do exist in those communities.

WIV-H10 **WIV-O7**

4. Place **Overhead WIV-O7** on the overhead (Environments, Relationships, and Linkages)

5. Refer participants to **Handout WIV-H10** (same as overhead).

Key Points

- Both families and children need supportive environments for healthy development.
- Promotion and prevention approaches are the most effective ways to strengthen families.
- A family-centered approach emphasizes parent-professional partnerships and links families and community support.
- This is the last of four workshops exploring the family-centered approach.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACH . . .

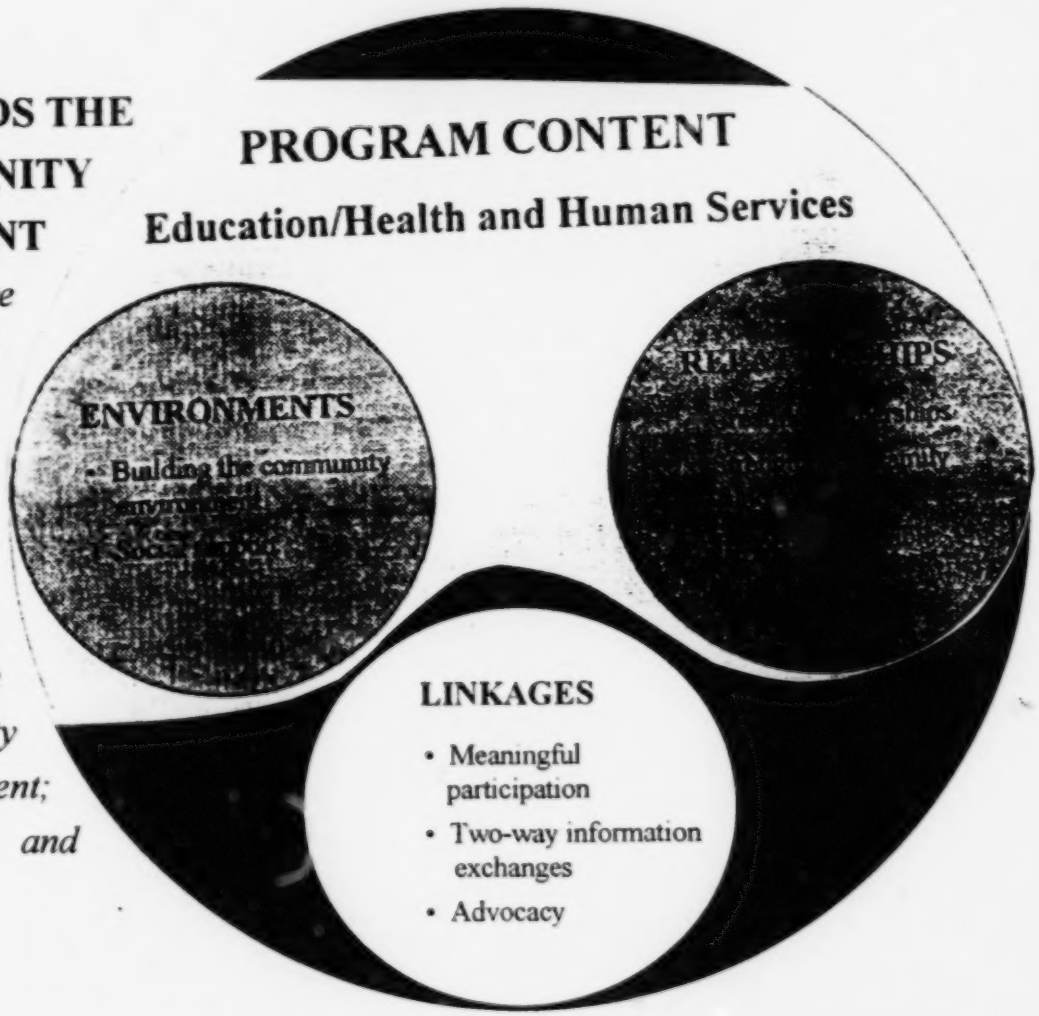
CREATES HELPING AND PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS,

because families are supported and child development is enhanced through helping and partnership relationships:

Handouts

BUILDS THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

because families gain information, resources, and support through their connections to the community environment; and

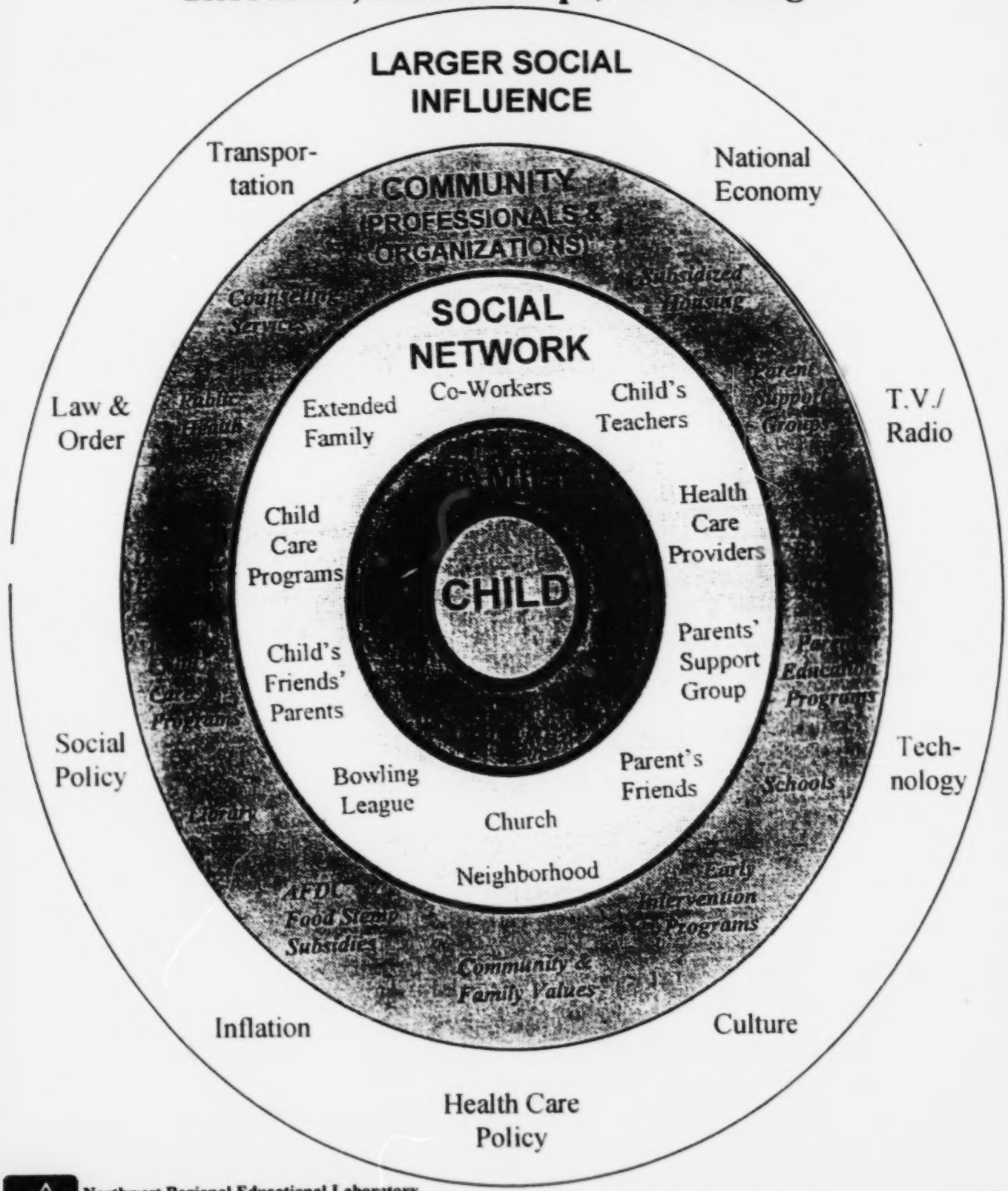


LINKS FAMILIES TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES

because participation, two-way information exchanges, and advocacy strengthens both the community support network and family functioning.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COMMUNITY SYSTEMS:
Resources, Relationships, and Linkages



BENEFITS OF INFORMAL SUPPORT

The benefits of informal social support include:

- It is often more culturally appropriate than any formal support being offered;
- It is non-stigmatizing help -- people make contact with their peers who are experiencing or have experienced similar situations;
- Informal support uses social comparisons to help individuals learn coping strategies -- what works and what doesn't;
- It normalizes experiences, increasing parental confidence;
- Informal support provides a psychological sense of community: "I'm not the only one";
- The informal process empowers participants;
- It provides a sense of shared experience and belonging;
- It reassures people's sense of worth and self-identity.

FAMILY ADVOCATES . . .

ARE	ARE NOT
Involved with school restructuring and reform efforts;	Outside agents, not part of the change process;
Prevention specialists;	Crises managers;
Individuals who promote parent empowerment, involvement, and participation;	"Experts" on parenting who represent parents;
Professionals who involve school staff at all levels;	Volunteers with no status in the school structure and who operate in isolation with parents or principals;
Involving school staff, seek input on a regular basis;	Alienating staff with isolated relationships with parents;
Professionals with a variety of skills;	Volunteers with a lesser status, and more limited skills;
Selected especially to meet the diverse needs of families.	Representing the dominant Culture and its expectations.

SOME OF THE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE FAMILY ADVOCATES WORKING IN OUR SCHOOLS:

Working With Families:

1. Empowerment: listen in a non-judgmental manner to all family members.

2. Flexibility: be creative and thoughtful in developing solutions for families.

3. Assistance: families need to identify their short- and long-term needs.

4. Modeling: present problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.

5. Prioritizing: assist families in developing their priorities and promoting self-sufficiency.

Working With School Staff:

1. Survey the school staff's perceptions of family needs.

2. Establish trust and credibility with school staff.

3. Inform the school staff regularly and provide feedback from referrals.

4. Be accessible to staff; attend meetings; empathize with teachers' needs.

Working With Principals:

1. Meet regularly and keep principal informed regarding conditions and issues facing families.

2. Exemplify a "**Can-Do**" attitude with flexibility to work under a wide variety of conditions.

3. Be supportive and sensitive to the roles and responsibilities of the principal.

4. Be an excellent time manager with a flexible work schedule, and know how to prioritize work.

5. Demonstrate an understanding of each individual school's culture.

6. Seek support for special training opportunities to cross-train with other agencies.

7. Assist principals to evaluate services and strategies and design mid-course corrections.

Special Skills Needed To Work With ESL And Other Diverse Populations:

1. Utilize a "teach *me* about **your** culture" approach.

2. Be respectful of boundaries and variations in roles; look for the common ground.

3. Provide information in native language whenever possible, either written or through a translator.

4. Build relationships with community leaders.

5. Provide school staff with information, training, and support to work with diverse families.

6. Advocate the needs of special populations to other agencies serving these families.

7. Find ways for families to enter school culture and contribute their talents to the school.

8. Monitor the school environment to respect diversity.

9. Look for non-conventional methods to provide support.

10. Learn history, culture, and other attributes which avoid biased approaches to support.

PROGRAMS THAT WORK

HOME VISITS

Successful family involvement programs must have a strong component of outreach to families at home, on their own turf. Many urban families will not come to the school, or will come only when summoned about their children's problems. There are many reasons for this: conflicting work schedules, low interest or lack of experience in group activities and meetings, shyness or fear about school-based activities, negative personal experiences with schooling, and barriers of language and culture.

Effective home visitor programs are practical and stress family strengths, family empowerment, and the building of informal neighborhood networks.

Major elements of such a program include:

- Paid parent support workers, selected on the basis of previous experience in counseling or training in community settings;
- Systematic training, supervision, and support;
- Services which provide information about school programs;
- Services demonstrating positive ways to work with children;
- Services which offer referrals to health and social service agencies; and
- Meetings between teachers and home visitors to exchange information and ideas.

(Excerpted from Owen Heleen, *Is Your School Family Friendly?* **Principal**, 1992)

PROGRAMS THAT WORK

PARENT CENTERS

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1978) writes. "The presence of parents can transform the culture of a school." She is right. In many schools, parent centers are low-cost success stories, making possible a continuing and positive physical presence of family members, including paid parent coordinators and their younger children, unpaid volunteers, parent visitors simply dropping in for coffee and a chat, and parents enrolled in center-sponsored ESL and GED classes. Parents report feeling more involved in their children's education when they have a welcoming "place of their own" in the building.

The requirements of a workable parent center are simple: An available space; some adult-size tables and chairs; a paid staff of parents (Chapter 1 and other federal and state program funds may be available for this purpose); a telephone to call parents and arrange field trips; and a coffee pot and hot water for tea.

What can a parent center do? The range of potential activity is nearly endless: ESL classes; GED classes and support groups; grade-level breakfasts; fathers' breakfasts; referral services; clothing exchanges; lending libraries for educational toys; games and videos; meetings of community advocacy groups; immunization services; school registration; computer classes; and health clinics to name but a few of the activities that various schools have undertaken. A school in San Fernando, California, is exploring the possibility of using its parent center as a "one-stop" facility for family, community, and social services.

(Excerpted from Owen Heleen, *Is Your School Family Friendly?* **Principal**, 1992.

PROGRAMS THAT WORK

PARENT CENTERS

Parent centers make possible the presence of family members and may include:

- Paid parent coordinators and their younger children;
- Unpaid volunteers;
- Parent visitors;
- Parents enrolled in center-sponsored ESL and GED classes.

The requirements of a workable parent center are simple:

- An available space;
- Some adult-sized tables and chairs;
- A paid staff of parents;
- A telephone;
- A coffee pot and hot water for tea.

What can a parent do? The range of activities is nearly endless:

- ESL and GED classes;
- Support groups;
- Grade-level breakfasts;
- Fathers' breakfasts;
- Referral services;
- Clothing exchanges;
- Lending libraries for educational toys;
- Games and videos;
- Meetings of community advocacy groups;
- Immunization services;
- School registration;
- Computer classes;
- Health classes;
- Use as a "one-stop" facility for family and community social services.

FAMILY STORY

The Mother
Mrs. Hamachek's Story

It all began with a broken fuel pump. Well, to be truthful, it started way before that. We were doing okay – Ernie (that's my husband), Gabe (he's six), Maggie (she's three), and me. True, we still lived in Felony Flats (also known as Mt. David Housing Project), but we were putting money aside every month to get us a place where we could get away from the drug deals and the fights and the paper-thin walls; where we could have a vegetable garden for Ernie, and a flower garden for me, and a cat for Gabe and Maggie; and rooms bigger than closets; and a place for the kids to play.

Ernie was working for the McKinley Farm Machinery Company. He'd been there for only six months, but was getting tons of overtime; enough so that I dropped down from full-time to half-time at Kinder Care. It was hard on Maggie to share me with 25 other kids, and Gabe wanted me to be there when he came home from school. The pay wasn't great, but I love the kids and it beats Taco Bell. Ernie would tease me, "Why did the daycare worker cross the road? To get to her other job," he'd laugh. "Very funny," I'd say, "but I don't need another job with you around to bring home the paycheck."

Ernie and all he folks at McKinley were working so hard for so many hours, they were breaking all kinds of records and the company was making record profits. So, when the boss called them all in for a big meeting, everyone was sure it was to get a raise and a bonus just to say thanks. When the boss told them they were closing the plant to move to West Virginia, everyone walked away numb. They just couldn't believe it, you know.

When Ernie came home that day, he was different. He didn't say much, just kept staring out the window. He could have worked another week, but he didn't. He just stared. And it looks like we're never gonna get out of here. I guess I should be grateful, though, cause at least we have cheap rent, and if we'd moved out, the waiting list for the projects is 8 years long.

I went on ADC for a couple months, just to get on my feet. All because of a company that was so greedy, they sold out their people just to get a tax break. Talk about people like me being on ADC -- what bout Aid to Dependent Corporations! But my hours at Kinder Care went up to almost full-time, and we're squeaking by.

Then, Maggie got sick and Gabe started making trouble at school and the fuel pump went out. And how am I supposed to ride the bus to get us all where we have to go by 8:00 in the morning? This isn't New York -- the busses run every 45 minutes. So, there we are, standing in the rain, waiting for the bus, with no car and no husband, and no way to pay for health care, and heat, and car payments, and food on $650 a month.

So, when my caseworker calls me and wants to know why I've been late to work so many times, and tells me he can't help me pay my baby-sitter because she isn't old enough; and Gabe's teacher keeps writing notes home saying Gabe doesn't sit still and do his work, and my mother -- well, that's a different story. Anyway, what am I supposed to do?

Sure, the baby-sitter's only 14 -- but she's got a lot more sense than my caseworker. Besides, who else is going to come to my house and feed Gabe when he comes home from school for $1 an hour?

But all the caseworkers talks about is self-sufficiency and job attachment. Well, I'm attached, but how can anyone be self-sufficient on my wages. It won't be my fault if I lose my job.

And Gabe -- he misses the only dad he's ever known. And yeah, he hates to sit still and he's so nervous about holding a pencil, he holds them so tight he breaks them. I always said, if Gabe couldn't ride it or throw it, or climb it, he wasn't interested. But watch him ride his bike or play ball!

So, what are schools for? Like my neighbor says, "'When the corn don't grown, you don't blame the corn. You say, 'Am I watering it enough; am I feeding it enough?'" So why blame me and Gabe? Why doesn't she figure out what to do so he can learn? I'm doing my job, and then some. Why can't the school do theirs?

The Teacher
Mrs. Lady's Story

I'm worried about Gabe. He's such a bright kid. But, he just won't do his work. And he mother won't answer my notes. I can't say he gets much support at home. His mom -- she can't be more than 21. She's never even been to a parent/teacher conference. If she would at least read to him every night.

Jane, the kindergarten teacher, says he did fine in her class. That doesn't surprise me -- she's one of those developmentally appropriate devotees. So, of course, all he did was play last year. If you ask me, DAP is just an excuse not to teach. No wonder the kids coming from her class can't write their names or sit still. Gabe can't even hold a pencil. And hyperactive! You should see that kid. He's out of his chair more than he's in it. I wouldn't be surprised if he's drug affected. Not that that's unusual. I'd say that more than half my class would have been in self-contained classrooms ten years ago.

We spend more time working on behavior problems than we do on teaching. And we're supposed to bring all the test scores up to above average! How can we do our jobs when parents aren't doing theirs?

The Caseworker
Mr. Able's Story

It's not that Cindi is a bad parent, or even that she doesn't try. But, she makes all the wrong decisions -- like hiring a baby-sitter who's not even 15 and expecting us to pay for it. Sometimes, I think I should turn her over to Child Protection; but I suppose she thinks 14 is old enough -- she was already a mother at 16. It's probably good practice for the baby-sitter -- she'll be a mother soon enough.

And the fuel pump -- if she hadn't spent the money on Christmas presents for her kids, she'd have had enough to fix it. And now, she might lose her job because she can't get to work on time. But there it is -- babies having babies -- with a different father for every kid. And wanting the tax payer to pay for it. But someone has to help those kids. They don't pick their parents.

FAMILY STORY: QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

- What are the strengths of this family?
- What formal support does the family need? What informal support?
- How can the school help to address the family's needs and/or refer them to other services?
- What additional support does Gabe need?
- What are your limitations in helping this family?
- What might the cost to society be for providing the support Mrs. Hamachek needs to raise her children?
- What might the cost to society be for not helping?

Schools, social programs, and caring individuals can compensate for stressful environments and troubled families . . .

When you read the histories of children from impoverished neighborhoods, the first thing that strikes you is the stunning number of obstacles they face -- the hundreds of tiny curves where it's possible for them to fall off a tightrope that's much higher and narrower than any path more privileged children have to tread.

But the second realization you have is how small the difference between success and failure can be; while a third is how important it is to be respectful of the strengths and knowledge which do exist in those communities.

(Coontz, 1995)

A FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACH . . .

- ▽ BUILDS THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

  because families gain information, resources, and support through their connections to the community environment.

  (ENVIRONMENT)

- ▽ CREATES PARTNERSHIPS

- ▽ STRENGTHENS FAMILY FUNCTIONING

- ▽ PROVIDES FLEXIBLE, TAILORED, RESPECTFUL SUPPORT

  because families are supported and child development is enhanced through helping and partnership relationships.

  (RELATIONSHIPS)

- ▽ LINKS FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

  because participation, two-way information exchanges, and advocacy strengthens both the community support network and family functioning.

  (LINKAGES)

INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE

BUILDING BRIDGES:
Supporting Families Across Service Systems

by Charles Bruner

There is growing recognition that different systems serving children and families need to work with one another—to collaborate in meeting the needs of families.

The reasons are reflected in what front-line workers see on a daily basis. Teachers see that children bring more than educational needs into the classroom. Health practitioners know that pregnant women bring more than medical needs into the health clinic. Professionals in job training see that families bring more than employment needs into the welfare office.

Moreover, unless these other needs are addressed, teachers know that it will be difficult for children to learn well. Health practitioners know that the prenatal care they provide will not necessarily result in a healthy birth. Job trainers realize that many of their graduates will experience difficulty in establishing stable, long-term attachment to the workforce.

The calls for collaboration, school-linked services, and service integration reflect this growing recognition. Further, reformers increasingly are turning to family resource centers and family support programs, which, in two ways, can be a critical connecting link, or bridge, for collaborations that lead to family success.

The first way that family resource centers and family support programs enter into discussions of collaboration is programmatic. Most literature on collaboration and service integration views family resource centers and family support programs as filling a missing service niche at the prevention and early intervention end of the service continuum.

Collaboration, in this case, assures cross-system referral and follow-up. There is someone providing "case management" or "care coordination" so that families experience a more "seamless" system of services and supports that are coherent and integrated rather than conflicting and fragmented. When professionals in different service systems collaborate, all are better informed of each others' involvement with families and are more capable of integrating their workplans. They have greater familiarity with other services for families available in their community and are more successful in making referrals for additional supports.

Programmatically, family resource centers and family support programs are also seen as bridges between the professional service systems and voluntary support networks—family, friends, churches, community associations. Public institutions and agencies refer families to family resource centers and family support programs; these centers and programs bridge for families the public and the private, the therapeutic and the normative, the specialized and the general, the professional and the voluntary, even the church and the state.

The second way that family resource centers and family support programs enter into collaborative strategies is philosophic. As well as being programs and providing services, family resource centers and family support programs represent a service philosophy based upon specific values: building upon strengths, partnering with families, individually tailoring supports, being holistic, valuing diversity, focusing upon individual growth and development in the context of the family, and viewing the family in the context of the neighborhood and community. Those collaborating with family resource centers and family support programs must articulate the role that family support principles should play in working with families within, as well as across, service systems. Collaboration between family resource centers and family support programs and other service systems cannot truly exist unless these other systems reflect the same undergirding values.

Moreover, the work that family resource centers and support programs do to empower families can easily be undermined when families experience other service systems that are deficit-oriented, dominating, impersonal, fragmented, arbitrary, and individual-based rather than family-focused. While the mission statements from most public service systems do not embrace such

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

characteristics, too many families see those systems in this light.

Unless the education, child welfare, mental health, public welfare, disability, youth services, and health care systems better incorporate family support principles into their professional practices, family resource centers and family support programs will be fighting an uphill battle. At best, they will serve as temporary oases from the mainstream institutional services and supports with which families (particularly socially isolated and vulnerable families) must contend.

This issue of *FRC Report* provides evidence that new programs and service strategies incorporating family support values are emerging within public service systems. As family resource centers and family support programs have grown over the last two decades reforms also have been underway to reshape service philosophies within each of these systems.

It is important that family support practitioners and advocates build bridges to these reform efforts because:

1. Public service systems are developing effective practices that deserve to be applied within family resource centers and family support programs, including: effective outreach strategies, assessment techniques, evaluation tools, and financing mechanisms.

2. At the local level, the individual programs and practitioners that incorporate family support principles into their work are natural collaborative partners with family resource centers and family support programs. Identifying other services in their communities that adhere to family support principles helps family resource centers and family support programs operate most effectively.

3. The people behind these reform efforts represent potential allies for promoting policy reforms and undertaking public education efforts to broaden support for family resource centers and family support programs. They are needed as partners in the process of defining the appropriate role of their programs in changing the way public systems respond to families and neighborhoods.

4. If public policies, practices, and programs are to succeed with children and families with whom they currently fail, mainstream public institutions—schools, child welfare agencies, public welfare departments, mental health services, health care systems, and disability services—must be transformed. It is within these systems—and not within family resource centers and family support programs—that the bulk of public resources will be spent on, for, to, or with families. If family support practitioners and advocates recognize the need for these larger reforms, the family support movement can be a catalytic force and ally in such transformation.

The first step in the process of building these alliances is understanding the reforms in practices already underway within public service systems.

The first step in the process of building these alliances is understanding the reforms in practices already underway within public service systems. The articles that follow highlight some of the best examples of family support values being operationalized within different professional practices. They are arranged under the professional service disciplines of education, child welfare, health care, youth services, disability, public welfare, and mental health. The programs described within these disciplines are truly innovative, cutting-edge efforts. They represent the potential for these mainstream service systems to change; they do not reflect common practice within these fields. Each section's overview essay offers some of the most advanced thinking on transforming the professional system to better meet family needs. Program profiles illustrate family supportive approaches in action.

Taken together, these articles represent a first effort to describe the connection between family support values and larger reform agendas within and across other service systems.

As these articles show, the changes that are needed are profound. If larger reforms are to succeed, there must be changes in the manner in which teachers teach, child welfare services protect children from harm, and mental health professionals work with families. Welfare reform efforts must not only help parents enter the workforce, but must also ensure that their children live in safe home environments and start school ready to learn. Parents of children with disabilities must be recognized as experts on their children's needs by the professionals who serve them.

While these changes are profound, they also are based upon sound underlying principles of effective practice. They ultimately will enable families to succeed, regardless of the service systems they use. While the first phase of the family support movement may have been to build a new, and necessary, programmatic base, the next phase is to assure that all systems serving children and families reflect the values responsible for family support's success.

Charles Bruner, Ph.D., is director of the Child and Family Policy Center, a former Iowa legislator, and a member of the board of directors of the Family Resource Coalition.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

calvin and hobbes
THIS SCULPTURE WILL BE CALLED "THE SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE." WE'LL EACH MAKE A SNOWMAN AND HAVE THEM SHAKING HANDS.
GREAT.
THIS WILL BE VERY INSPIRATIONAL! PEOPLE WILL WEEP TO SEE TWO SNOWMEN OVERCOMING THEIR DIFFERENCES AND COOPERATING! SOON WE'LL BE ROLLING IN PUBLIC COMMISSIONS!
MAKE YOUR SNOWMAN'S ARM LONGER. HIS HAND WON'T REACH MY SNOWMAN'S HAND.
WHY SHOULD I MAKE A NEW ARM? JUST MAKE YOURS LONGER.
THEN IT WILL LOOK LIKE MY SNOWMAN HAD TO REACH FARTHER THAN YOURS DID. THEY SHOULD BE EQUAL.
THEN BUILD YOUR SNOWMAN CLOSER OVER HERE!
I'M NOT GOING TO START ALL OVER! JUST MAKE YOUR ARM LONGER!
I REFUSE! YOU CAN'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO!
IN THAT CASE, MY SNOWMAN REFUSES TO SHAKE WITH YOUR SNOWMAN!
SO WHAT!! MY SNOWMAN WON'T EVEN TALK TO YOURS! I'M TURNING HIS HEAD THE OTHER WAY!
HA! WHILE HE'S LOOKING OVER THERE, MY SNOWMAN WILL KICK YOUR SNOWMAN IN HIS BIG WHITE BUTT!
WHY YOU!!
LEGGO
OOF
STOP IT!
I DON'T THINK THIS SCULPTURE IS VERY GOOD.
IT'S A COMPROMISE.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTRODUCTION

A historic strength of America is how we've come together to tackle difficult problems. It's time for communities to do this again for young children and families.
Ron Herndon

BY THE YEAR 2000, ALL CHILDREN IN AMERICA WILL START SCHOOL READY TO LEARN.

Children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies and the number of low birth weight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.

Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need.

All disadvantaged or disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.

President Bush and the 50 governors announced our national education goals following the 1989 Education Summit Conference at Charlottesville, Virginia. This first goal – school readiness – is strongly supported by political leaders of both parties and the general public. It reflects our increased understanding of the importance of early childhood experiences for school performance – and our increased concern about present efforts to support young children and their families.

Since the goals were promulgated, the National Education Goals Panel has worked to create a framework to measure progress on the goals. At the same time, the Department of Education's America 2000 Initiative urges states and communities to formally adopt these ambitious and crucial objectives. The National School Readiness Task Force offers this report to encourage and guide public policy and community efforts to achieve Goal #1. We begin with **a redefinition of school readiness** and an overview of our **two key recommendations to create "Caring Communities"** as the primary focus for efforts to achieve this goal.

Redefining School Readiness

We began our work with a strong awareness of problems with current school readiness practices. In many communities, readiness is measured solely in terms of specific academic skills and knowledge, and young children who "fail" these tests are discouraged from entering kindergarten or assigned to various forms of two-year kindergarten programs. These practices reflect a misguided and incomplete conception of readiness and of early childhood development (Kagan, 1990; Meisels, *et al.*, in press). A redefinition of school readiness – based on what we **know** about how young children learn – is long overdue. After reviewing pertinent research and theory, talking with parents and teachers, and incorporating a strong dose of common sense, the Task Force concludes that school readiness has four facets: children; parents and early childhood programs; schools; and communities.

1. School readiness is far more than academic knowledge and skills. Readiness is based on children's physical health, self-confidence and social competence.

> ***Readiness is about little children with basic needs that have to be met – not just at age 5 but from birth. Children need dental care and eye exams and immunizations as well as love and nurturing. We must give kids a strong start.***
> *Terri Rosegrant*

Readiness for school requires an emerging facility to experience and shape one's environment, rather than the mastery of discrete facts and skills. Professional opinion and common sense agree that a child's readiness for school is enhanced by good physical health, ability to speak and listen, a degree of emotional stability and independence, and social skills.

Physical health is inextricably linked to children's ability to learn:

- Developmental delays, hearing or vision impairments, emotional difficulties or learning problems often result from inadequate support for health development.

- Children's ability to concentrate is diminished when they are tired, hungry, uncomfortable, under stress or bothered by the disruptive behavior of others.

- School attendance is often reduced, through absences or time required to get medical attention, when children are in poor health (Zill, 1990, p.2).

In our interviews with more than 100 Head Start, child care, and kindergarten teachers, we found that self-confidence and ability to cooperate with staff and peers are the key factors in early school success. Teachers explicitly value these traits in children far more than being able to recite the alphabet, recognize shapes, numbers and colors:

> "If children have strong self esteem, if the self-esteem is in place, the learning will come."

> "I want the child to come in with enthusiasm, just loving to be at school. I just want children to wake up first thing in the morning and say 'Is this a school day? I want to go.' I don't worry so much about the academics, yet. If I can get them in here and get them excited about school, then we've got it made."

> "The child who is ready stands tall, asks a lot of questions, is ready to answer questions, is curious, uses materials in a lot of different ways, and rarely says 'I can't do this.' "

Thus, teachers' opinions mirror the increasingly sophisticated research on the development of social competence (Hartup & Moore, 1990) and self-esteem (Curry & Johnson, 1990). Teachers are confident they can work successfully with young children who feel good about themselves, are willing to try and are able to enter into the classroom community.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2. School readiness is not determined solely by the innate abilities and capacities of young children. Readiness is shaped and developed by people and environments.

Readiness depends on the interactions of children with institutions and people. It's not solely based on what resides inside children nor can it be easily measured.
Samuel Meisels

All young children are naturally motivated to make sense of their lives and to explore their surroundings. However, what they learn varies enormously in its potential to enrich development and its contribution to the eventual demands of fitting into a kindergarten classroom. For example, if infants are left in cribs for hours without being held or changed or spoken to, they learn about their limited ability to have any effect on the world. They get the message that people don't care for them. If 4-year-olds spend hours each day repeating addition facts or tracing letter shapes, they view learning as boring, repetitive and fraught with the danger of making mistakes.

Young children may be inherently curious, but they are not in charge of their "working conditions." Young children depend on adults for nourishment, emotional support, conversation, learning materials and transportation. Getting ready for school involves helping children in the context of families and improving programs in terms of the morale and skill of their staff members. Today's young children spend their early years in a wide range of environments (Hofferth & Phillips, 1991):

- 11.9 million preschool children are cared for by parents, relatives or other caregivers in their own homes – so we must offer support, information and encouragement to and through families; but

- 6.7 million young children leave their homes for child care, nursery schools or family child care settings for all or part of every day – so we must also apply what we know about high quality early childhood programs.

3. School readiness is not solely determined by the quality of early childhood programs. Readiness also depends on the expectations and capacities of elementary schools.

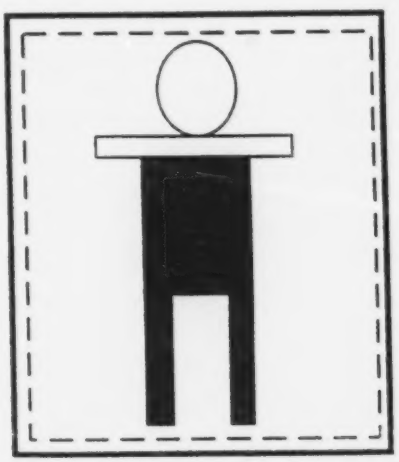
> ***[T]he single most important strategy that schools can adopt in pursuit of 'readiness 2000' is the upgrading of their early childhood services by readying schools for young children....***
> *(Kagan, 1990, p.277)*

> ***School readiness must be embedded in our larger movement for education reform. Our ultimate goal is to create caring and productive adults.***
> *Patricia Hamner*

Children are legally eligible to enter public schools based on chronological age. Yet, their chances for success depend not only on their capabilities, but also on kindergarten teachers' expectations and programs. For example, teachers who expect children to sit still for long periods of time or to complete endless sets of worksheets may view the majority of 5-year-old children as unready. Or if a school district requires children to pass a test to enter kindergarten, then the test becomes the sole measure of success for 4-year-olds in the community.

School readiness also depends on the resources and supports provided to teachers. A single teacher with responsibility for 35 5-year-olds will be hard pressed to respond to children with different learning styles, diverse cultural backgrounds and languages, and varying levels of maturity. Smaller group sizes – with resources such as community volunteers, older children as tutors, computers, and strong staff development in developmentally appropriate methods – can help teachers support success in a wider range of children. The need to equip teachers to respond positively to student diversity also extends beyond the kindergarten level into the primary grades. As one kindergarten teacher told us:

> "I have taught these children to have so many choices and to speak when they have something to say. My worry is when they get to first grade the teacher will say, 'I didn't ask you what you thought or what you feel – sit down!' Have I done anything for them? Will they be crushed next year?"



4. School readiness is not solely the responsibility of individual parents. Communities have a stake in the healthy development of young children – and an obligation to support families.

The best way to get children ready for school is to have them grow up in strong families. We need to create communities that help families flourish and nurture their children.
Jack P. Shonkoff

Families are the primary agencies which prepare children for school and life. However, parents can be more successful if they are bolstered by informal and organized supports. Parents need to feel that they can meet the basic needs of their children for safety, for food, for emotional support and for health care. And parents need to feel that what they do with their children is valuable and important. The best early childhood programs work with and through parents. Rather than erode or conflict with parental responsibility, they empower and affirm families.

The national school readiness goal expresses our public interest – both altruistic and economic – in the welfare of every young child. Communities reap long-term benefits for each child who enjoys a successful start in school. Quality services that strengthen families and support early childhood development have far-reaching benefits. On the other hand, families and children who do not receive timely and quality help often require more costly services in future years. For example, we can choose to spend:

$1 on childhood immunizations	**OR**	$10 in later medical costs
$1 on comprehensive prenatal care for women through Medicaid	**OR**	$3.38 in later health costs
$1 for quality preschool education	**OR**	$4.75 for later special education, crime, welfare, and other costs
$850 for one year of compensatory education	**OR**	$4,000 for the cost of a single repeated grade
$4,500 per family for family preservation services	**OR**	$10,000 for one year of foster care for one child

Adapted from Children's Defense Fund. (1991) *The State of America's Children*, p.6.

Promoting School Readiness through Caring Communities

A caring community works together to support children and families so that children can enter schools ready to progress.
Heather Weiss

Assuring readiness is a process of people working together, with the family at the center.
Barbara Ferguson Kamara

The 1980s was a decade of activism in state education reform and early childhood initiatives. Then a new strategy of national education goals ushered in the 1990s. However, recent policy efforts have taught us that local effort and circumstances are pivotal in spurring true reform in social conditions or public schools.

Our national education goals offer much promise, but their realization depends on community initiative for three reasons:

- **Families live and children grow up in communities.** Young children are raised in homes and neighborhoods that either threaten or support their health and confidence. Young children are vulnerable to physical risks in the environment – or they can enjoy safe playgrounds, supportive neighbors and healthy surroundings.

- **Programs are implemented in communities.** State and federal initiatives are fleshed out or thwarted by local action and circumstance. Local professionals interpret legislative intentions through their daily interactions with children and parents. States and the federal government set the stage and write the script from a distance – but local actors perform the play.

- **Community leaders are close to the problems of young children and families** and best able to gauge the value of new early childhood initiatives. Local government officials and program managers know the people, remember the history of past efforts and are skilled at wedding public agencies, private and sectarian organizations and voluntary institutions.

"Caring Communities" are a historical strength of America:

- Caring Communities are created by personal commitment to collective action.

- Caring Communities are motivated by a sense of mutual obligation and a recognition that individuals benefit from investing in better futures for children and families.

- Caring Communities bring people together to develop a common vision of problems and solutions.

Caring Communities, therefore, are the primary force in assuring that families are supported in their efforts to foster children's learning and development. The Task Force offers two fundamental recommendations to define how Caring Communities should work to promote school readiness:

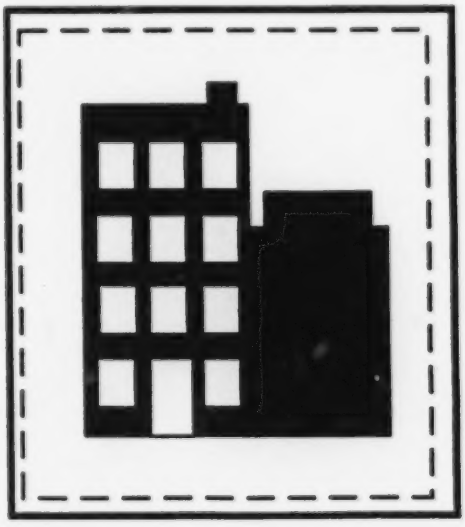
Recommendation #1. Caring Communities provide comprehensive support for young children ages 0 - 4 and their families.

Caring communities strengthen informal supports and develop quality programs for children and families. These programs fill gaps in health, family support, child care and related human services. Programs strive to link services for more continuous and convenient help to families.

Recommendation #2. Caring Communities improve support for young children and families in public school.

Elementary schools implement "developmentally appropriate" teaching and assessment practices, strengthen efforts in parent involvement and professional development for staff, and work with community agencies to provide appropriate and effective services to children and families.

Any plans to achieve readiness must deal with the real conditions that mold America's young lives and minds. The school readiness strategies outlined here address the environments and people that influence children's well-being and competence. School readiness hinges on what it is like to grow up in America, in families, neighborhoods, child care and Head Start programs and in public and private schools. Threats to children's safety and health must be eliminated. Children's emotional and social development must be promoted in families and supportive early childhood programs. Moreover, schools must get themselves "ready" for young children. Thus, no single "silver bullet" program can be created to guarantee school success for all children. We need to support and strengthen all the major settings where children live and learn – families, neighborhoods, community-based programs, and schools.



Reprinted with permission. Copyright 1992. National Association of Elementary School Principals. All Rights Reserved.

Is Your School Family-Friendly?

There are a number of ways to effectively link schools with families and communities.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Owen Heleen

Maria Bastone

A principal I work with put it succinctly: "In these times, if you care for the child, you have to care for the family. If you care for the family, you have to reach out to the community. We can't reach our academic goals unless we help our community address social and economic needs."

Owen Heleen is vice president of the Institute for Responsive Education and dissemination director for the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning.

All over the country, schools are redefining themselves as community institutions. Too often in the past, schools have not seen themselves in this role. Buffered by their separate budgets and the manner in which their "clients" are assigned, schools have been remarkably static in their view of family-community-school relationships, continuing to operate as if they were still serving Ozzie and Harriet's children. The last several years, however, have seen the development of a promising array of new strategies, policies, and mindsets that could significantly change the traditional family-community partnership.

Involving the Whole Village

In an era of diminishing resources and increasing pressure for improved outcomes for our young people, the strengthening of family-community-school partnerships has become a hot topic. However, like many hot topics, this one is too often filled with hot air.

Judith Emmert

We say that parent and community involvement can lead to better outcomes for kids. But instead of building a system in which people can truly participate in various ways, we run one-shot, add-on programs that ensure only tangential involvement.

However, some schools and communities are taking a different approach. They understand that it takes a long-term effort, involving many kinds of people in many kinds of roles, to have any real impact. They understand the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to educate a child," and they try to enlist the community—the whole village—in their effort.

Essentially, this effort involves three kinds of work for educators: Expanding our vision of family and community involvement; building new kinds of "doors" and "windows" in our schools; and developing new mindsets about families, communities, and schools. One example of such an effort is the League of Schools Reaching Out, a network of 75 schools coordinated by the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE). The schools work with IRE and with one another to further the development of programs of family and community involvement, the goal being success for all children.

Too often, however, our picture of family and community involvement is fuzzy and ill-defined, falling into stereotypical concepts that have little impact on student achievement. Any narrow definition of involvement renders it feeble, and focusing on just one kind of involvement is not a winning strategy. Joyce Epstein, co-director of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, has mapped out six different types of family-community-school collaboration (*see box*).

Programs that Work

A recent survey examined 42 urban schools that have specifically targeted family-community partnerships as priority needs. It found that the most successful schools had developed "broad" or "deep" participation programs.

One such school, the Matthew Sherman Elementary School in San Diego, California, helps families become more involved by providing training and support through parent education workshops, home visits, after-school day care, and referrals for social services. The school combines traditional communication strategies, such as parent-teacher conferences and report cards, with innovative strategies, including phone conferences with parents who cannot attend regular conferences, and quarterly meetings of teachers and parents to discuss collaborative objectives. The school encourages whole-family learning at home by lending parents books and materials.

The survey also found that the school's support for families is reciprocated by family support for the school. The independent Organization of Latino Parents (OLP) leads this support by training parents to help their children at home and by advocating on behalf of the school and the multilingual community to the board of education. Partly as a result of OLP efforts, the school now uses Spanish-language tests as alternatives to English-language standardized achievement tests.

Parents serve on a school council that makes decisions about curriculum, budget, personnel, and parent/community involvement, and on a team that coordinates many of the family-involvement activities at the school and facilitates the home visit program.

Expanding Involvement

In reviewing the most recent research on family-community involvement, Epstein has added three important attributes to successful broad-based programs:

1. *Effective partnership practices are developmental* because the interests and needs of families change as children grow, and because the partnership is itself a relationship with its own life course. Like any relationship, it must be purposefully nurtured and sustained.

2. *Effective partnership practices must be responsive to both common and unique family needs.* There is no such thing as a model family or community involvement program. Every successful program must be rooted in its own distinctive school community, and the most important operating principle is that of inclusiveness, especially the traditionally "hard to reach" families.

3. *Students must be key participants.* It is important to keep kids in the center of family involvement programs. Most principals know that the best-attended school events are those in which children perform or show their work. Similarly, making more children more successful must be the preeminent goal of all family program activity.

How do you get started with family and community involvement? A good way to begin is by building new ways to get new people involved in the life of your school. Develop strategies that provide symbolic doors and windows to the school.

Parent Centers

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1978) writes "The presence of parents can transform the culture of a school." She is right. In many schools, parent centers are low-cost success stories, making possible a continu-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

.ng and positive physical presence of family members, including paid parent coordinators and their younger children, unpaid volunteers, parent visitors simply dropping in for coffee and a chat, and parents enrolled in center-sponsored ESL and GED classes. Parents report feeling more positive about the school, and more involved in their child's education, when they have a welcoming "place of their own" in the building.

The requirements of a workable parent center are simple: An available space; some adult-size tables and chairs; a paid staff of parents (Chapter 1 and other federal and state program funds may be available for this purpose); a telephone that can also be used by teachers to call parents and arrange field trips; and a coffee pot and hot water for tea.

What can a parent center do? The range of potential activity is nearly endless: ESL classes; GED classes and support groups; grade-level breakfasts; fathers' breakfasts; referral services; clothing exchanges; lending libraries for educational toys, games, and videos; meetings of community advocacy groups; immunization services; school registration; computer classes; and health clinics—to name but a few of the activities that various schools have undertaken. A school in San Fernando, California, is exploring the possibility of using its parents' center as a "one-stop" facility for family and community social services.

Home Visits

For many educators, family involvement still means parents coming to the school for meetings, conferences, and other activities. Urban parents' interest in their children is often judged on the basis of how often they come to the school—a standard most middle-class parents would reject. Home visitor programs are erroneously seen as the province of social workers or truant officers.

Successful family involvement programs must have a strong component of outreach to families at home, on their own turf. Many urban families will not come to the school, or will come only when summoned about their children's problems. There are many reasons for this—conflicting work schedules, low interest or lack of experience in group activities and meetings, shyness or fear about school-based activities,

"Successful family involvement programs must have a strong component of outreach to families at home..."

negative personal experiences with schooling, and barriers of language and culture.

Drawing from the Family Matters program at Cornell University and the Parents As Teachers program in Missouri, we have helped several schools fashion practical home visitor programs that stress family strengths, family empowerment, and the building of informal neighborhood networks. The major elements of such a program are: Paid parent support workers, selected on the basis of previous experience in counseling or training in community settings; systematic training, supervision, and support; services that provide information about school programs, demonstrate positive ways to work with children, and offer referrals to health and social service agencies; and meetings between teachers and home visitors to exchange information and ideas.

Action Research Teams

A third easily replicable idea is to involve parents and teachers directly in studying home-school relationships and devising actions to improve them. At IRE, we are working intensively with parent-teacher action research teams in nine schools to help them design, implement, analyze, and evaluate their own small-scale family-community-school "interventions." Too often, teachers and administrators wait for reformers, experts, or the central office to tell them what they should do. Parent-teacher action research teams provide a simple structure for combining reflective inquiry and action in the areas that each school believes are most relevant.

Six Types of Family-Community-School Collaboration

Joyce Epstein of The Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning has categorized six types of activities found to be most effective in helping schools structure family and community involvement programs.

School Help for Families. Schools provide assistance to families in meeting the families' basic obligations: Children's health and safety; supervision, discipline, and guidance of children; and positive home conditions that support school learning and appropriate behavior.

School-Home Communication. Schools have a basic obligation to communicate to the family information about school programs and children's progress by means of letters, memos, phone calls, report cards, newsletters, conferences, and other means.

Family Help for Schools. This is the involvement of parent and community volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in school, as well as those parents and others who come to school to support and watch student performances and other activities.

Involvement in Learning Activities at Home. These activities include both parent-initiated and child-initiated requests for help, particularly ideas from teachers to help parents assist their children in activities coordinated with classroom instruction.

Involvement in Governance, Decision Making, and Advocacy. Parents and other community residents are involved in advisory, decision making, or advocacy roles in parent associations, advisory committees, school site councils, or advocacy groups that monitor schools or work for school improvement.

Collaboration and Exchanges with the Community. This includes involvement with community institutions that share responsibility for children's development and success, particularly those that provide support services for children and their families.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ew Mindsets —

Parent centers, home visits, and action research teams are just a beginning, a few of the doors and windows that can attract families to the school, reach other families at home, and engage teachers in improving curriculum and instruction through closer connections with parents and community resources. There are many other strategies, and we can hope that as new kinds of relationships are developed, new kinds of mindsets will follow. These include the beliefs that:

- *All* children can learn.
- *All* parents care about their children and want to help them.
- Changes in school and family conditions can enhance the social and academic development of children.
- It is appropriate for schools to serve as brokers for, and bridges to community resources that can aid children and families.
- Although families and teachers have many overlapping roles and responsibilities, they can help each other and do not need to be competitors.
- Teachers and parents can work together to study and act on problems, helping to link the classroom and the home.
- The social and academic development of children is enhanced when school, family, and neighborhood find ways to communicate, join forces, and become partners in the children's interest.

Building a broad-based program of family-community-school partnerships; finding innovative ways to make new partnership connections; and working to embody new ways of thinking in whatever we do—these are the ingredients that make up the family-friendly school. □

REFERENCES

Epstein, Joyce L. *School and Family Partnerships*. Baltimore: Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University, 1992.

Davies, Don; Burch, Patricia; and Johnson, Vivian R. *A Portrait of Schools Reaching Out: Report of a Survey on Practices and Policies of Family-Community-School Collaboration*. Baltimore: Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University, 1992.

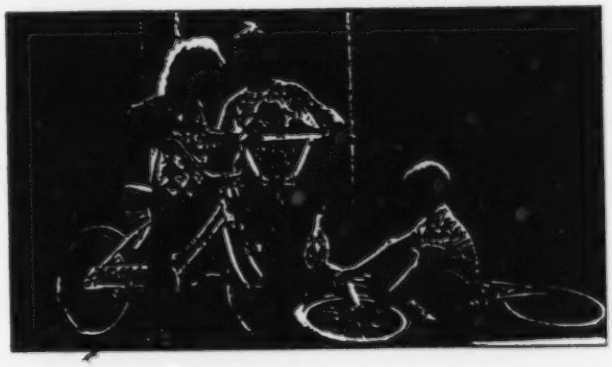
Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence. *Worlds Apart: Relationships Between Families and Schools*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, a research and development center funded by the U.S. Department of Education in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a consortium of the Institute for Responsive Education, Boston University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Illinois, Temple University, Wheelock College, and Yale University.

For additional information on the center and its programs, write to the Institute for Responsive Education, 605 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215, or call 617-353-3309.

Prevention that starts in the classroom . . . and continues on the playground.



When kids talk about Drug Free outside the classroom, you know they've got the message. Now with 2 levels, the affordable Drug Free —

- Provides complete K-6 materials
- Requires no special training to use
- Qualifies for federal funding

For more information about Drug Free 1 (grades K-3) & the new Drug Free 2 (grades 4-6), call AGS today!

1 • 800 • 328 • 2560

AGS®

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reprinted with Permission. Copyright 1994. National Association of Elementary School Principals. No Rights Reserved.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

COLLABORATION: A New Leadership Dimension

Schools must collaborate with other agencies to meet the social and educational needs of today's children.

MICHAEL D. USDAN

Educational leadership at all levels has attracted increased critical attention and scrutiny in recent years. The base of decision making has broadened as influential new leaders shape educational policy in unprecedented ways. Indeed, a new politics of education has evolved in recent years with governors, legislators, and business and civic leaders much more engaged in school issues at all levels of education.

How should the traditional leaders—principals, superintendents, and board members—react to these new participants in the educational decision-making process? Should they resent the intrusion of "outsiders" who have little or no experience, who don't comprehend the daily complexities of operating contemporary schools, and who underestimate the problems of putting into practice "quick fixes" which resonate well politically, but are difficult to implement? Or should professional education leaders welcome the growing involvement of such politically influential participants?

If one analyzes current social, demographic, and political realities, there is really no option. We must accept these influential political and business leaders as important allies of public education. These are men and women who understand the need for quality schools to provide a more competent and well trained work force in an increasingly competitive and interdependent world economy.

Principals and other education leaders ought to welcome the interest of these new participants for pragmatic reasons, not only because of the political clout they wield, but also because demographic changes are rapidly eroding public education's traditional support base. Only about 25 percent of the adults in the United States currently have youngsters enrolled in public schools, which means that there are fewer citizens with parents' vested interest in the success of education.

Shifts in demographics have also significantly altered the socioeconomic composition of today's students. Approximately a third are considered to be at risk and confront a host of social and economic problems which profoundly influence their capacity to learn in our public schools.

Elementary school principals and teachers, in the front line of efforts to meet the escalating needs of younger children in growing numbers of urban, rural, and suburban schools, are particularly cognizant of these demographic realities. They realize the need for special guidance, health, early childhood, nutrition, parent education, day care, and after-school care programs in all types of communities.

"Our challenge in education is to build ... linkages that ... will broaden the base of support from the political and business communities."

Seeking Community Support

If the large and growing proportion of special-needs students is to receive the benefits of expanded and integrated social support systems, educational leaders will have to coordinate school activities with a wide range of other community services. For example, it is estimated that more than 40 percent of today's preschool children are being reared in poverty or economically marginal circumstances. Growing numbers of elementary school principals acknowledge that they can no longer unilaterally handle the com-

Michael D. Usdan is president of the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

plex social and educational problems of these children.

From first-hand experience they recognize that if the developmental problems of young children are to be meaningfully addressed, efforts must be intensified to elicit support from the entire community for the necessary service delivery systems. Schools must develop new and stronger collaborations with parents, businesses, labor, public and private agencies, churches, colleges and universities, and other community institutions.

The difficulty of implementing such collaborations cannot be ignored. It is hard to ask leaders of public institutions and agencies to share resources when they face severe fiscal constraints, layoffs, and retrenchment. Many of those leaders view collaborative efforts with apprehension, fearing that such initiatives will further weaken their already inadequate support base.

Despite these concerns, however, it is imperative for schools to be involved extensively in collaborative initiatives. Why? To paraphrase the response of famed bank robber Willie Sutton who, when asked why he robbed banks, said, "That's where the money is," schools are where the children are.

It is for these children that school leaders must be in the vanguard of efforts to break down the professional barriers which separate them from social workers, health professionals, juvenile justice workers, and other service providers. Turf issues are real and difficult to resolve, and educators must overcome a trend toward specialization that hasn't changed much since it was articulated more than 60 years ago at a White House Conference on Children:

To the doctor, the child is a typhoid patient; to the playground supervisor, a first baseman; to the teacher, a learner of arithmetic. At times, he may be different things to each of these specialists, but too rarely is he a whole child to any of them.

Breaking Down Barriers

The tradition of separating education from other government institutions dates back to the municipal reform movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when advocates of good government believed that schools, particularly in urban centers, had to be shielded from blatant abuses of patronage and machine politics. This tradition continues to influence the attitudes of many educators and has created a culture that is often self-contained, detached, and insular.

Professionals from other fields who seek to work collaboratively with schools must recognize this tradition of separation and be sensitive to the attitude of educators who feel that nontraditional "add-ons" like health education are peripheral to the school's basic educational functions. This lack of support is exacerbated by the concerns of fiscally strapped educators who see dollars for other services being drained from traditional school programs.

What may be needed is a radical reconfiguration of the financing of public services, with rewards for those who effectively coordinate education and related human services. Principals and other school leaders are in a unique position to help communities work through these complicated turf issues, and they must do so if the providers of education, health, welfare, and other social services are to work cooperatively.

As Lisbeth Schorr points out in her recent book, *Within Our Reach: Breaking Cycle of Disadvantage*, there are common elements that typify successful programs in education, health, and other human service fields. Effective programs provide comprehensive and intensive services; deal with children as part of families, and with families as part of neighborhoods; transcend bureaucratic and professional boundaries; and enable staff ample time to build relationships and trust with clients.

Our challenge in education is to build the creative, collaborative linkages that will not only serve children better in school, but will also broaden the base of support from the political and business communities.

We see education already enveloped in policy areas linked to broader economic and social issues, such as trade, child care, AIDS, immigration, drugs, youth training, and welfare. An exciting new era of collaboration may be dawning.

It is said that there are three categories of people: those who make it happen, those who let it happen, and those who wonder what happened. Education leaders must be in the first category as we work collaboratively to meet the changing needs of American children.

"We'll have to climb, either way we go."

Lisa Marie Branam, Grade 6, Age 11, Newport, TN

Responsibility, respect, self-discipline and self-esteem *can* be taught.
Pre-K is not too early to start!

Call us!
1-800-284-0499

DEVELOPING RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS
Since 1942

CHARACTER EDUCATION INSTITUTE
8918 Tesoro Dr., Suite 575, San Antonio TX 78217-6253
(210) 829-1727 Fax (210) 829-1729

Member ASCD Character Education Partnership

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PROFILE

Changing the Way Schools Do Business:
"The Comer Model" and Accelerated Schools

by Carolyn Ash

Four years ago, at Jefferson Elementary School in Chicago, school decisions were made by the principal or a committee appointed by the principal. There were conflicts and confrontations between staff and between parents and staff. Students weren't achieving their potential.

Today, the principal, teachers, other school staff such as custodians and administrative staff, parents, and other community members work together to reach consensus around decisions that affect children. Many parents have gone back to school or have become employed. More students are performing at or above national norms; more are actually getting a year's educational growth after a year of schooling.

What accounts for these changes? Approximately four years ago, Jefferson adopted the educational model of the Accelerated Schools Project at Stanford University. A year later, the school included the model of the School Development Program developed by James Comer at Yale University. Becoming an Accelerated/Comer school has turned Jefferson around.

What are Accelerated Schools?

In the Accelerated Schools program, developed in 1986 by Stanford University professor Henry Levin, the goal is for all students to achieve at or above grade-level by the end of sixth grade. The program is based on three key principles:

1. a **schoolwide unity of purpose** through which teachers, students, and parents agree on common goals

2. **empowerment** through school-site decision-making and responsibility

3. instructional strategies that **build on the strengths** of students, teachers, administrators, other school staff, parents, and the community

Accelerated Schools are characterized by school-based governance; pupil and school assessment ("taking stock," as some school personnel call it); an emphasis on health and nutrition; a relevant curriculum that stresses language-based and higher-order thinking skills, including analysis and problem-solving; innovative instructional strategies, such as mixed-ability groupings, active learning, peer tutoring, and cooperative learning; parent involvement and use of community resources; and extended day sessions.

While all Accelerated Schools include these curricular, instructional, and organizational practices and principles, each school develops a plan tailored to its own vision. The first step to becoming an Accelerated School is creating a steering committee composed of the principal, teachers, and aides. This steering committee, then, organizes additional committees to address the priority issues for that school. In collaboration with the district, the school develops a school improvement plan.

What is the Comer Model?

"The Comer model" is shorthand for the Yale Child Study Center's School Development Program (SDP), directed by Dr. James Comer. Established in 1968 in two elementary schools, the SDP model began as a collaborative effort between the Yale University Child Study Center and the New Haven Public Schools. "The two schools involved were the lowest achieving in the city, had poor attendance, and had serious relationship problems among students, staff, and parents."[1]

The Comer model took shape in response to these conditions. Its four main components are:

1. a **mental health team**, consisting of a social worker, psychologist, and special education teacher, which works to identify and prevent behavioral problems and to connect schools with community resources

2. a **governance and management team**, consisting of the principal, a member of the mental health team, a teacher, students (in middle and high school), and selected parents, which plans strategies, gathers resources, and implements interventions

3. the **parents' program**, in which parents are encouraged to work as part-time aides in the classroom, as members of the governance group, and as participants in schoolwide academic and social events

4. **curriculum and staff development**, which support the physical, moral, social, psychological, speech, language, cognitive, and intellectual growth of all students

The program aims to help children bridge the gap between the attitudes, values, and behaviors they experience at home and the ones they experience at school. In Comer schools, parents, teachers, and other school staff work toward common objectives and create compatible environments for children. Parents, school staff, community members, and central administrators are all responsible and accountable for the implementation of the program.

After approximately 20 years, more than 300 schools in 18 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Comer, or SDP, model. "Numerous schools using the SDP model report statistically significant gains in the targeted academic and social areas—language arts, reading, mathematics, attendance, and school behavior—compared to similar schools not using the model. Several SDP schools have made spectacular academic gains and have received national attention."[2]

Jefferson Elementary School Principal Harold Miller believes that people are more likely to "buy into" something if they have input in it. Jefferson has used the Comer and Accelerated Schools models to transform itself into a responsive learning environment that includes families and community members as partners in the educational process.

The Comer and Accelerated Schools models are examples of family-supportive approaches to reforming the system in which children are educated—altering the way that teachers teach, administrators administrate, and parents parent. Incorporating their principles and practices changes the way that schools do business and benefits children, their families, their schools, and their communities.

Carolyn Ash is a program development associate at the National Resource Center for Family Support Programs at the Family Resource Coalition.

[1] Comer, J. P. "A Brief History and Summary of the School Development Program: 1993-94." (unpublished)

[2] Ibid.

Author's note:
Special thanks to Harold Miller and Yolanda Weaver, at Jefferson Elementary School, for graciously agreeing to be interviewed for this article.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Involving Parents

The following is a list of specific practices that schools can employ to encourage the involvement of parents—especially single and working parents, non-English-speaking parents, and poor and minority parents. By no means is this an exhaustive list, but the items convey a sense of how to welcome parents and make their participation easier and more meaningful.

- Increase the awareness and sensitivity of school staff to parents' time constraints; announce meetings long enough in advance to allow parents to arrange to attend.
- Give parents blanket permission to visit the school at all times—to visit classrooms, use the library, or talk to teachers or administrators.
- Establish or support family learning centers in schools, storefronts, and churches.
- Make school facilities available to a variety of community activities.
- Facilitate teen-, single-, working-, and custodial-parent peer support groups.
- Provide before-school child care so that working parents can see teachers before going to work.
- Conduct evening meetings, with child care, so that working parents can attend.
- Conduct evening awards assemblies to recognize students and parents for their contributions to the school.
- Establish bilingual hotlines for parents.
- Send bilingual messages to parents, telling them things they can do at home to help educate their children.
- Do not make last-minute cancellation decisions.
- Print all signs in the school in languages spoken by school families.

Under the direction of Dr. James Comer, the Yale Child Study Center's School Development Program has developed a model for family involvement, which has contributed to the dramatic improvement of two New Haven Schools (see next page). A key strategy is including parents on a school management team that sets objectives and strategies regarding school climate, academics, and staff development. The management team, under the direction of the principal, consists of a representative group of parents and teachers. "The parents develop workshops for themselves, are actively involved in tutoring programs, and help teachers plan and implement the school's social calendar. These activities were specifically designed as part of a strategy to make the parents highly visible in school life, and the result has been a spiral of ever-improving performance by students, teachers, and parents" (Flaxman and Inger, 1992). They identify a few general principles of parent/school partnerships:

- Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, well planned, and long-lasting.
- Parent involvement should be developmental and preventive, rather than remedial intervention.
- The beliefs of parent involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades.
- Parents do not have to be well-educated in order to help.
- Children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents.

*From Flaxman, E., & Inger, M. *Parents and Schooling in the 1990s.* Principal, November, 1992

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801
(217) 333-1386

ERIC Digest

EDO-PS-93-8

Collaboration: The Prerequisite for School Readiness and Success

By Linda G. Kunesh and Joanne Farley

Each day in the U.S., hundreds of thousands of youngsters and their families face a multitude of problems associated with poverty, inadequate housing, poor health care and nutrition, difficulty in school, substance abuse, and neighborhood violence. Research indicates that these problems are interrelated at a variety of levels and in complex ways. Children and families at risk of one problem are increasingly at risk for a number of other problems, so much so that it often is difficult to distinguish between problem domains. To the extent that the dynamics of individual and social problems are interrelated, it makes sense that solutions to these problems must also be integrated and multidimensional.

Problems With the Current Service Delivery System

Melaville and Blank (1991) discuss several critical flaws of the current service delivery system. Most services are crisis-oriented. The social welfare system divides problems of children and families into rigid and distinct categories that fail to reflect the interrelated causes and solutions of the problems. There is a lack of functional communication between public and private sector agencies. Specialized agencies have difficulty crafting comprehensive solutions to complex problems. And finally, services are insufficiently funded.

From the perspective of families, the services they need are often not available or not easily accessed. Further, some services are unacceptable to families who must use them because the services focus on family weaknesses and problems rather than family strengths. Teachers, social workers, nurse practitioners, and other "frontline workers" who deal directly with families also fault the system. They are frustrated that youngsters come to school with problems that interfere with learning, and they acknowledge they are overburdened by high caseloads and constrained by strict rules that control who they can work with, for how long, and what services they can offer.

Awareness of the problems of the service delivery systems is growing at the state and national levels, as policymakers search for methods to encourage coherent and comprehensive solutions to the problems of children and families. Indeed, the National Task Force on School Readiness recently redefined *school readiness* to more realistically reflect the complexity and interrelatedness of forces that shape the development of young children. The National Task Force recognizes that school readiness is more than academic knowledge and skills. Readiness also requires that children reach and maintain certain levels of good health, self-confidence, and social competence. Readiness is not determined solely by the innate abilities and capacities of young children; rather, people and environments help shape children's readiness. The task force acknowledges that school readiness is not solely determined by the quality of early childhood programs; it also depends on the expectations and capacities of elementary schools. Finally, the task force emphasizes that the healthy development of children in all areas is not solely the responsibility of parents, but should include whole communities that have a stake in the healthy development of children and families. Clearly, the National Task force on School Readiness accepts the fact that all sectors in a child's life—family, school, and community—play important roles in determining whether the child will be successful (National Task Force on School Readiness, 1991).

Changing Direction Toward a "Profamily System"

With the growing recognition that everyone plays a part in the success (or failure) of children and families, new efforts to change the delivery of educational and human services have emerged. According to the School-Linked Integrated Services Study Group, which is sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, collaboration is required to fashion a new profamily system—one that expands the capacity of helping institutions and crisis-intervention and treatment services to work together. This system must create new working relationships, operating assumptions, and high quality services that support families and help them reach their potential. While specifics of such a system will vary according to the needs of each community, the availability of resources, and the stage of development, a profamily system must always be:

- *Comprehensive.* A variety of opportunities and services respond to the full range of child and family needs.
- *Preventive.* The bulk of resources are provided at the front end to prevent problems, rather than at the back end for more costly crisis intervention and treatment services.
- *Family-centered and family-driven.* The system meets the needs of whole families, not just individuals, and assumes every family has strengths. Families have a major voice in setting goals and deciding what services they need to meet them. Service delivery features, such as hours and location, serve family needs, rather than institutional preferences.
- *Integrated.* Separate services are connected by common intake, eligibility determination, and individual family service planning, so that each family's range of needs is addressed.
- *Developmental.* Assessments and plans are responsive to families' changing needs.
- *Flexible.* Frontline workers respond quickly to family needs, and waivers are available to address or prevent emergencies.
- *Sensitive to cultural, gender, and racial concerns.* Respect for differences is formalized in systemwide policy statements,

carried out in staff development activities, and reflected in the diversity of governing boards and staff.

- *Outcomes-oriented.* Performance is measured by improved outcomes for children and families, not by the number and kind of services delivered (Melaville, Blank, and Asayesh, 1993).

Characteristics of Effective Initiatives to Change Service Delivery Systems

Throughout the country, in large cities and small rural areas, many communities and counties have formed collaboratives and begun initiatives to create more responsive services for children and families. While none has fully implemented a community-wide profamily system, their combined efforts suggest that effective service integration initiatives have several characteristics in common. They are "school-linked," providing services and programs for children and families from a school or group of schools. School staff, along with personnel in other agencies, are involved in planning, operating, and governing the initiatives. Effective initiatives are rooted in the community and closely connected to state government, having the backing and involvement of those who use their services, those who provide them, and those who help pay for them. Effective initiatives experiment with designing and delivering needed services tailored to target populations or neighborhoods before expanding. They are data-driven, using comprehensive community profiles that are developed to establish baseline indicators showing how well children and families are faring, how well services are meeting family needs, and where gaps in services exist. Effective initiatives are financially pragmatic, fully using existing resources. External support is primarily used for planning and to provide enough financial stability to ensure that pilot efforts point toward systemwide policy changes.

Guidelines for Effective Collaboration

Many factors influence the success of interagency collaborations. No two collaboratives progress in exactly the same way or in the same time frame. In the final analysis, each interagency effort must proceed in a way that is consistent with its unique circumstances and composition. Nevertheless, the literature on collaboration offers some guidelines that have wide applicability:

- Involve all key players so that collaborative decisions and activities receive widespread support and recognition.
- Ensure that the collaborative has leadership that is visionary, willing to take risks, and facilitates change.
- Establish a shared vision of how the collaborative should progress and of the expected outcomes for children and families served by the collaborative partners.
- Build ownership at all levels. Commitment to change must be mobilized at all organizational levels of member agencies and among community members involved in the collaborative.
- Establish communication and decisionmaking processes that recognize disagreement among actors as a part of the process and establish ways to deal with conflict constructively.
- Institutionalize change by encouraging member agencies to include collaborative goals in their institutional mandates and by earmarking funds for collaborative activities.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, remember that change begins with individuals, not institutions. Agency representatives must be allowed to take time from routine responsibilities to meet and interact with each other so that trust and respect on an individual level can be generated. It is through personal interactions that the trusting relationships across agencies that sustain the growing pains associated with systemic change are nurtured.

Clearly, the road to successful school readiness involves a new vision that encompasses not only children and their environments, but the roles schools, communities, and service agencies must play in the healthy development of children and their families. The process of raising and educating healthy children who are able to succeed in society requires new strategies for communitywide commitment to addressing the needs of the whole child.

For More Information:

Boyer, E.L. *Ready To Learn: A Mandate for the Nation.* Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1991. ED 344 663.

Bruner, C. *Thinking Collaboratively: Ten Questions and Answers To Help Policy Makers Improve Children's Services.* Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium (c/o IEL, 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, #310, Washington, DC 20036). 1991. ED 338 984.

Kagan, S.L. *United We Stand: Collaboration for Child Care and Early Education Services.* New York: Teachers College Press, 1991.

Melaville, A., Blank, M.J., and Asayesh, G. *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services.* Available from Superintendents of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. (Specify stock #065-000-00563-8). 1993.

Melaville, A., with Blank, M. *What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services.* Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium (c/o IEL, 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, #310, Washington, DC 20036), 1991. ED 330 748.

National Task Force on School Readiness. *Caring Communities: Supporting Young Children and Families.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education, 1991.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). *Meeting Children's Needs and Integrating Community Services* (videotapes and guidebooks) and "Every Child is the Community's Child—Agency Collaboration for School Success." *Rural Audio Journal* 1 (3). Available from NCREL, 1900 Spring Rd., Suite 300, Oak Brook, IL 60521. 1992.

Sugarman, J.M. *Building Local Strategies for Young Children and their Families.* Washington, DC: Center on Effective Services for Children, in press.

Sugarman, J.M. *Building Early Childhood Systems: A Resource Handbook.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 1991.

References identified with an ED (ERIC document) number are cited in the ERIC database. Documents are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 825 locations worldwide. Documents can also be ordered through EDRS: (800) 443-ERIC.

This publication was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. OERI 88-062012. Opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI. ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM
APR 6 1995

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Working to improve the lives of young children in poverty through field-based program analyses, informed policy and program development, and information dissemination

News and Issues, *Winter/Spring 1995* VOL. 5, NO. 1

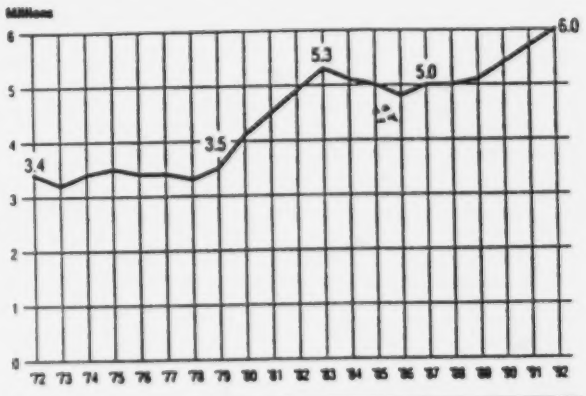
Number of Poor Children Under Six Increased from 5 to 6 Million 1987–1992

A new Center report, *Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update,* illuminates once again the harsh reality that propels the Center's work—the continued growth in the number of U.S. children under six living in poverty. Between 1987 and 1992 the number of poor children under six grew from 5 to 6 million, and the poverty rate for children under six reached 26 percent. In 1992, the poverty line was $9,137 for a family of two, $11,186 for a family of three, and $14,335 for a family of four.

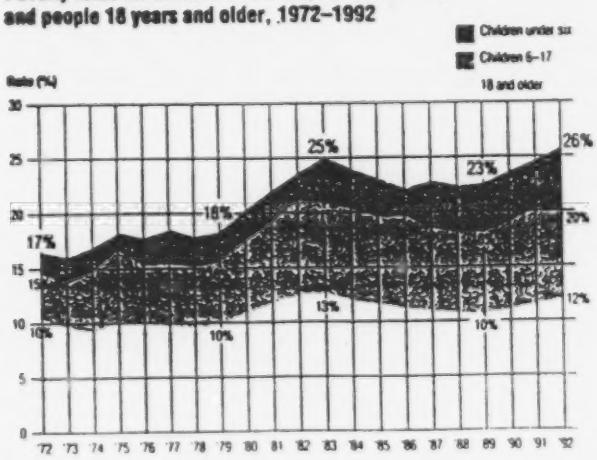
J. Lawrence Aber, the Center's new director, cautions that the increasing number of poor young children reflects a 20-year trend that is having devastating consequences on children today whether they are toddlers or teenagers.

"The number of poor children under six grew from 3.4 million in 1972 to 6.0 million in 1992," Dr. Aber reports. "The significance of these figures for our society cannot be overstated because we will pay the costs for the next several decades. Poverty gives rise to many types of deprivation, and many of our youngest, poorest children suffer severe consequences in terms of their physical health and psychological development."

Number of poor children under six, 1972–1992



Poverty rates for children under six, children 6–17, and people 18 years and older, 1972–1992



"Poor young children are not very visible to the rest of us," Dr. Aber stressed. "They live in isolated neighborhoods and are rarely noticed until they reach first grade and 'fail,' become adolescents and 'get in trouble,' or reach adulthood and can't find jobs. Our country's lack of attention to them has created a serious situation of growing proportions."

"The distribution of poverty in American families throughout urban, rural, and suburban areas is not always predictable, and the causes and solutions are not simple," Dr. Aber noted. "We have to base new public policies on documented facts. We have to keep looking at the children and learning what they need and what will help them survive, develop, learn, and become healthy self-sufficient members of society."

The new report focuses on the interrelated factors that affect the lives of children under six living in

(continued on page 2)

Also in this issue:

Child Policy Analyst Jane Knitzer Joins Center as Deputy Director 3
Communities Develop Ways to Promote Health in Preschool Child Care Settings 4
Publications of Note 6

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Percentage distribution and number of all poor children under six by sources of family income, 1992

Source of family income	Poor children under six	
	Percentage distribution	Number (in millions)
Earnings, no cash public assistance	38	2.3
Earnings and cash public assistance	20	1.2
Cash public assistance, no earnings	32	1.9
All other sources of income	10	0.6

poverty. It reveals demographic patterns that are not consistent with public myths about poor children and their families. For example, as many as 38 percent of poor children under six in 1992 lived in families supported by earnings only—and no cash public assistance—and less than one-third of poor children under six lived in families that relied exclusively on cash public assistance for their incomes.

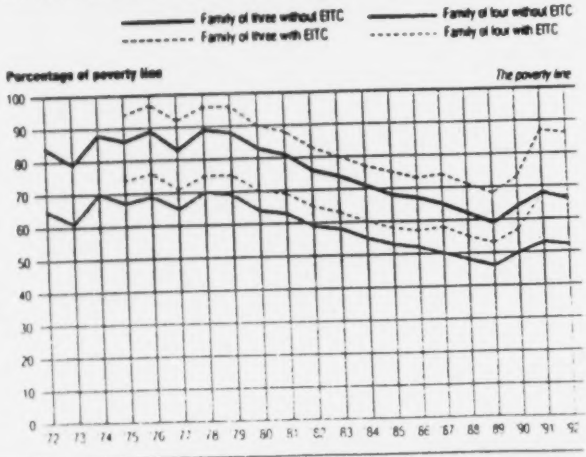
Findings also included the following 1992 data:

- The poverty rate among children under six living in urban areas was 35 percent, compared with 19 percent in suburban areas and 28 percent in rural areas.
- More than half, 55 percent of poor children under six were black or Hispanic—a very disproportionate representation. Of all children under six, only 29 percent were from these two groups.
- A majority of poor children under six had parents who worked full-time or part-time. Just over one-sixth, or 18 percent, of all poor children under six (with one or two parents present) lived with unmarried mothers who worked full-time or with married parents at least one of whom held a full-time job.
- Children under six living with unmarried mothers are much more likely to be poor than are those living with married parents. Even so, over two million poor children under six lived in married-couple families.
- Unemployment accounted for the poorest families. The poverty rates of children under six living with unemployed parents that year varied little between those in married two-parent families (83 percent) and those living with unmarried mothers (82 percent).
- Full-time employment does not guarantee that families will not be poor. The federal minimum wage was $4.25 per hour in 1992. If a person worked 1,750 hours in a 35-hour-a-week full-time year-round job, the income generated would be only $7,438—just 66 percent of the poverty line for a family of three and 52 percent of the line for a family of four. Even claiming the maximum Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) would not lift these families out of poverty: 1992 income in a two-child family, with one parent earning the minimum wage, would reach only $9,648—14 percent below the poverty line for a family of three and 33 percent below the line for a family of four.
- Over ten million children under six lived in low-income families in 1992. Of the six million children under six living in poverty, just under half (2.9 million) lived in extreme poverty, in households with a combined family income below 50 percent of the federal poverty line. An additional 4.4 million lived in near poverty that year, in households with a combined family income 100–185 percent of the federal poverty line.

Center demographers Jiali Li and Neil G. Bennett based the report's 16 graphs and tables largely on analyses of the Census Bureau's 1993 March Supplement to the Current Population Survey. Funds from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York supported the new analyses. (See this newletter's back cover to order the publication or a set of slides.)

The federal government classifies a family as poor if its pretax cash income falls below a minimum standard, adjusted for family size and for changes in the average cost of living in the United States.

Minimum-wage earnings for full-time, year-round work as a proportion of the poverty line by family size, with and without the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), 1972–1992



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

School-linked Family Support Gets a Big Boost

Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

On October 20, 1994, President Clinton signed the Improving America's Schools Act, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for five years. The law authorizes about $11 billion in FY 1995 for most federal K–12 education programs and enacts program changes that are considered the most significant since the ESEA was first passed in 1965.

Some Important Changes Included in Act

- **Integrating disadvantaged students into high-standards classrooms:** More schools will have the freedom to keep Title I (formerly Chapter 1) children in regular classrooms and apply Title I funds to a school-wide reform effort. Current law allows a school to do this only if 75 percent of its students are "disadvantaged"; the Improving America's Schools Act lowers that requirement to 50 percent.

- **More effective use of scarce federal dollars for schools most in need:** Through a revised formula, the Act gives more Title I funds (for disadvantaged students) to the schools with the highest poverty rates. The 1995–1996 school year will bring increased funding to nearly every school district. The increase will be sustained the following year, and in 1997–1998 schools with the most need will see further increases. This formula will begin the process of increasing funding for schools with the most needs—those in working-class and poor communities.

- **Cutting red tape to put schools back in charge:** The Improving America's Schools Act will help reduce the red tape for all federal programs. Local schools will have the authority to consolidate federal funds from diverse programs to pay for more comprehensive locally based reforms.

Key Family Support Provisions

The Improving America's Schools Act includes many provisions that are of key importance to family support professionals:

Title I—Helping Children in Need Meet High Standards

Title I authorizes $7.4 billion for FY 1995 for compensatory education programs. Improvements in the Title I program include:

- **State plans**
  Each state must develop a plan that includes high-quality standards and assessments that are developed with input from local district officials, teachers, parents, and others.

- **Local plans**
  Local school districts must develop plans that include assessments, professional development strategies, a parent involvement policy, and a description of how the district will use its funds.

- **Parental involvement**
  Districts and schools must work with parents to write a parent involvement policy and plan for its implementation. They must also convene yearly meetings on parent involvement and help parents understand the process of setting national goals and standards. Districts must devote at least one percent of their Title I funds to parent involvement activities.

- **School-wide projects**
  A school may use its Title I funds for projects to upgrade its entire educational program if in FY 1995 at least 60 percent of its students are from low-income families, or if in subsequent years this figure reaches 50 percent.

- **Even Start**
  Even Start provides states and districts with grants, which they must match at 50 percent after four years, to integrate adult literacy, adult basic education, parenting education, and early childhood education into a program run by a school district and a community organization. Teen parents are eligible. Even Start is authorized at $118 million for FY 1995.

- **Transition to Success**
  This demonstration program is designed to assist low-income children in their transition from early childhood programs, such as Head Start, to elementary school. It integrates comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and other social services; fosters parental involvement; and promotes developmentally appropriate curricula. Transition to Success is authorized at $40 million for FY 1995.

Title X—Programs of National Significance

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers**
  This program authorizes $20 million for grants to schools or consortia of schools for projects "that benefit the education, health, social service, cultural, and recreational needs of a rural or inner-city community." Schools can be funded to start or expand integrated education, health, social service, recreation, cultural, and parenting skills programs; as well as services for individuals with disabilities, day care services, and support and training for day care providers.

- **Urban and Rural Education Assistance**
  Authorized at $125 million, this program issues grants to states and districts to help in rural and inner-city school improvement efforts and reforms. Funded activities include pupil and other support services, collaboration with health and social service agencies to provide comprehensive services and facilitate students' transition from home to school, and services to decrease the use of drugs and alcohol among students and enhance their physical and emotional health

Title XI—Coordinated Services

Title XI is designed to give students and their families better

Continued on page 6

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Secretary Riley Calls for Greater Family Involvement to Increase Learning, Announces Nationwide Partnership

Speaking at the National Press Club on September 7, 1994, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley announced that the Department of Education (DOE) would join with the 45-member National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (of which FRC is a member) and other organizations and businesses to place family involvement and learning high on the American agenda.

Riley said the new collaboration, called the National Family Involvement Partnership for Learning, would "promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement," one goal of the Educate America Act, by:

- Bringing together organizations and individuals working in this field
- Encouraging schools, businesses, and communities to establish a supportive environment for family involvement
- Conducting and sponsoring research showing the relationship between effective school practices and family involvement in learning
- Identifying and publicizing outstanding examples of family involvement across the U.S.
- Providing useful information to parents

General Goals of the Partnership

The National Family Involvement Partnership for Learning is in the early stages of development and is establishing a long-range strategic plan. Among the major goals it hopes to pursue over the next five years are:

1) To increase the general understanding and awareness of the need for family involvement in education

2) To develop a shared commitment to work jointly for increased family involvement

3) To develop the capacity of schools and communities to become more adept and able to involve families

4) To identify and support the use of programs and practices to develop the capacity-building of partnerships among families, schools, and communities

5) To support the development of appropriate benchmarks for assessing performance and accountability

Strong Families, Strong Schools

A report released recently by the Department of Education entitled *Strong Families, Strong Schools* includes a summary of concrete examples to inspire parents to use the power and potential they have to shape their children's education.

The report points to 30 years of research showing that "greater family involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high quality education and a safe, disciplined learning environment for every student," and concludes that family involvement must be a "special focus of any school improvement effort."

To receive a copy of *Strong Families, Strong Schools*, call DOE at 1-800-USA-LEARN. To receive more information find out how to get involved in the National Family Involvement Partnership for Learning, write:

National Family Involvement Partnership for Learning
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20202

Reauthorization

Continued from page 3

access to the social, health, and educational services necessary for children to succeed in school. Schools or consortia of schools may use up to five percent of their ESEA money to coordinate the delivery of these services, creating community-wide partnerships and making public and private agencies' services available at one site (e.g. a family support center) in or near a school. The Secretaries of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Treasury, and Agriculture and the Attorney General are to review programs under their jurisdiction to identify barriers to service coordination.

Title XIII—Support and Assistance Programs to Improve Education

Title XIII authorizes $70 million in grants to establish a network of 15 comprehensive regional assistance centers. The centers are to provide training and technical assistance to help planners and program coordinators administer and implement the programs under the Improving America's Schools Act. Each center must maintain staff expertise in a variety of areas, including expanding parent participation and coordinating services and programs to meet the needs of students and families.

More Help for Families of Children with Disabilities

Passed as part of the Improving America's Schools Act, the Families of Children with Disabilities Support Act amends the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and authorizes grants to states to develop or expand family-centered, family-directed statewide systems of support for families of children with disabilities. This program is authorized at $10 million for FY 1995; however, Congress failed to appropriate any funding for it that year.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Learning from Denver Family Resource Schools:

The Model and the Process

by Lucy Trujillo

The Model

The seven Denver Family Resource Schools (FRS) operate from the premise that children are likelier to succeed in school with a strong family and community supporting them. Unfortunately, many families and communities, particularly in urban areas, cannot by themselves provide the essential foundation for effective schooling. For this reason, Denver's Family Resource Schools focus on building the relationship between schools and communities and on strengthening the capacity of families and communities to support children's learning.

The Family Resource Schools provide the traditional, student-focused, academic support programs and non-traditional family-focused programs—like employment workshops, adult education, parenting classes, peer support groups and tutoring programs that involve parent participation. They aim to increase students' academic achievement through enriching the academic program and removing noneducational barriers to learning.

All Family Resource Schools have expanded their hours of operation, have developed summer programs, and have increased parent and community involvement. They also offer childcare.

Each school has a Collaborative Decision Making team (CDM) that makes all programming decisions. Each CDM includes representatives from the school (teachers, office, custodial, food service, principal), families, neighborhood, and businesses. They reach all decisions by consensus.

Although each CDM decides on its school's final program, the CDMs from all seven Family Resource Schools (FRS) have agreed to concentrate on the following five program areas in order to achieve their mission:

1. Student achievement and growth
2. Adult education and skill-building
3. Parent education
4. Family support services
5. Staff development and training

Actual programs and activities vary from school to school. One school coordinates family nights at the Denver Art Museum and Colorado Symphony; another implements a Family Math program; and yet another has cleared a piece of school land for a community garden. Each school feels pride in its accomplishments! And families are involved at every level from planning to execution of each activity.

Each school has an FRS site coordinator who works under the direct supervision of the principal. The site-coordinator implements and manages FRS programs and coordinates school, parent, and community outreach. The site coordinator functions as case manager, fundraiser, translator, instructor, clerk, financial manager, broker of resources, appointment scheduler, chauffeur, volunteer coordinator, and much, much more!

Project Development

Planning for the Family Resource Schools project began in the fall of 1989. It relied on both research ("Schools of the 21st Century" by Dr. Edward Ziegler, Yale University) and a successful school project already underway in Denver where one elementary school had been experimenting with site-based management and community partnerships for the delivery of services.

Representatives from the Denver Public Schools, the Mayor's Office, community organizations, and foundations worked together on the project planning team. In addition to drafting the concept paper and establishing the proposal process, the planning team borrowed a local corporate executive to develop fundraising strategies. They sent the request for proposals to all Denver public elementary school principals. Elementary schools were the focus for two reasons: first, all available research indicates that early efforts to improve children's lives pay greater dividends; second, elementary schools have close ties to neighborhoods and are within walking distance of the homes of most neighborhood residents. Thus community building efforts based at elementary schools are likelier to succeed.

The Denver planning team offered each school:

- Technical assistance to develop a plan to become a Family Resource School
- Assistance in negotiating collaborations with other agencies to bring additional services into the school
- Assistance in securing outside funding for new activities.

Copy the Process, Not the Model

Patricia Carpio, FRS Project Director, warns educators in other cities: "Don't take a program that has already been designed and just plop it down in front of staff and community. They might say "OK". But they won't have internalized the commitment it takes to make the program work. And that program might not be what they need." Instead, Carpio says," Copy the process.

"Start by creating a climate that is free of blame," Carpio suggests. "Too often, when children aren't learning what they need to learn, principals blame teachers, teachers blame parents, parents blame the school. Rather than look for someone to blame, they all need to prepare to make

changes—even drastic changes—that will improve the children's education. To work together, principals, teachers, and parents must assume each other's commitment to their common goal."

"Get a commitment to change from a group, even if it is a small group. The group needs to be representative of the community so its actions can have a ripple effect. It also needs to set its own direction so it has an investment in the process."

"Then design the programs, the means of change. Remember it requires no blame and a lot of determination."

The Role of the Principal

The principal of a school is a key person in the effort to bring a family-focused program to the school. Only minimal progress will be made unless the principal commits his/her support to the program. *Ultimately*, within the school system, the principal still is accountable for the safety and academic progress of the children. In addition, the principal continues to evaluate staff and meet with parents when conflicts arise.

The new program's planning and decisionmaking process requires that the principal share power with teachers and with parents. As a result, the principal's role becomes more problematic. Teachers or parents may challenge some of the principal's functions and the principal may feel threatened by some of their suggestions. All parties need to understand that the program cannot succeed unless the principal feels comfortable with it. A Family Resource School does not have to implement every new idea, but it must listen to new voices and new ideas.

The principal also serves a vital role in freeing up teachers to participate in meetings, training sessions, and special events while ensuring that the children do not suffer from the teachers' frequent classroom absences. On the other hand, as resources for a school are leveraged and children have many more opportunities to participate in many more excursions and special activities during the regular school day, teachers' classroom goals and objectives may suffer. The principal must create the proper balance for both staff and children.

The principal is also key in getting staff "buy-in." A Family Resource School experiences more nontraditional teacher-parent interaction (many parents drop in as casual classroom observers or volunteers) and increased work for office and custodial staff (busier phones, increased number of parents seeking assistance, more evening events requiring late night cleaning shifts). If these work demands irritate staff members and evoke a hostile response from them, the school environment will not be family-friendly. The principal can help prepare the staff for the changes and identify ways to handle the increased workload.

Parent Outreach

Parents also play a key role in implementation. If they don't participate, "family" is missing from the Family Resource School. When asked how she gets parents to participate in school functions, FRS site coordinator Tep Falcon says, "I remember back to my campaigning days. I was told a voter must see or hear the name of a candidate 28 times before they will remember it. It's the same with our activities: you can't just send a flyer home with a child two weeks before the event and expect family participation. You have to send the flyers, but you must also make phone calls, send reminders, make personal visits, get the children interested to let them know you want them there. That they are special. That they will be missed if they can't attend. There also has to be time for socializing and celebrating successes. All work and no play will definitely keep parents away."

Project Implementation

Successful implementation has a bottom line. No matter how good or how poor the model, key people have to want it to work and they have to be willing to put in a lot of 16-hour days.

Every person in the Family Resource School is vital to its success. It comes down to people: people who share a vision and are willing to put in the time, people who have high expectations but recognize the importance of celebrating small successes, and people willing to work *together* as a team to make a difference for children.

For more information, contact Lucy Trujillo, project coordinator, Family Resource Schools, 975 Grant Street, Denver, CO, 80203, 303/764-3587.

Core Components of the Family Resource Schools

Student Achievement and Growth:
Before-and after-school programs including:

- Community study halls with volunteer tutors
- Family read-alongs and family math classes
- Swimming lessons
- Guitar classes
- Community garden
- Cultural activities with the Denver Art Museum

Adult Education and Skill Building:
- Adult Basic Education (ABE)
- General Equivalency Diploma (GED)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Spanish as a Second Language
- Conflict management
- Employment workshops
- Housing workshops for first-time buyers
- Weight Wise—health and nutrition programs

Parent Education:
- MELD program (Peer support group for young mothers)
- Weekly parent training programs
- Positive discipline workshops
- Sex education workshops
- Gang prevention workshops

Family Support Services:
- On-site case management
- Alcohol and drug prevention programs
- Before- and after-school childcare
- Childcare for all school programs and
- [illegible]
- [illegible] banks
- [illegible]
- [illegible]

[illegible] and Training:
- [illegible] concept and
- [illegible]
- The school community
- Parental involvement
- The culture of poverty
- Building teams
- Community resources
- Making referrals

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE ECOLOGY OF THE FAMILY: A Background Paper For A Family-Centered Approach To Education and Social Service Delivery

Prepared by
Christie Connard
with Rebecca Novick, Ph.D.

February 1996

Helen Nissani, Director
Child, Family, and Community Program
NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY
101 SW Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1
- AN HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE 1
- A PROCESS, NOT A METHOD OR CONTENT 2

KEY CONCEPTS OF AN ECOLOGICAL MODEL 3
- INTRODUCTION 3
- THE FAMILY AS A SYSTEM 3

A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE: GOODNESS OF THE FIT MODEL 7
- CHILD DEVELOPMENT 7
- FAMILY DEVELOPMENT 7
- BEHAVIOR AS A COMPLEX INTERACTION OF FACTORS 8

THE DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY: RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS 8

THE ECOLOGICAL MODEL: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE 10
- HEAD START PROGRAMS 11
- EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS 11
- FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS 12
- PUBLIC SCHOOLS 13

SUMMARY 14

BIBLIOGRAPHY 16

THE ECOLOGY OF THE FAMILY: A Background Paper For A Family-Centered Approach To Education and Social Service Delivery

Prepared by
Christie Connard
with Rebecca Novick, Ph.D.

for
Helen Nissani, Director
Child, Family, and Community Program
NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

INTRODUCTION

This training module, *Working Respectfully with Families: A Practical Guide for Educators and Human Service Workers* was developed for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Integration of Education and Human Services Project. The goal of this project is to increase the ability of education and human services providers to form effective and supportive partnerships with each other and with the families they serve.

The purpose of this background paper is to familiarize the trainers of these modules and participants in the workshops with the research, theories, and practice knowledge that are the foundation of the workshop. The specific strategies and applications of a Family-Centered Approach are covered in the workshop materials.

AN HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

This paper is a synthesis of information from developmental psychology and sociology primarily. It draws from the literature of these fields at a time of change in both fields. In the last twenty years, child-oriented research in developmental psychology has evolved dramatically. It has moved from studies of the child in isolation to studies of one-way, caregiver to child developmental influences. Next, researchers began to consider reciprocal relationships, the way a child influences his or her caregiver and vice versa. Currently, developmental psychologists are studying how development is shaped by complex, reciprocal child-father-mother-sibling interactions.

While developmental psychology has focused on child-adult relationships, sociology has been concerned with marital relationships and the family as a whole in a social context. Recognizing the need to look at the family from both perspectives simultaneously, both fields are looking at child and family development in new ways. The coming together of these two areas of research has resulted in the adoption of an ecological framework.

The summary that follows is intended to familiarize practitioners working with families with some key concepts, rather than provide in-depth understanding. Much of the richness and detail of the research and theory has been left out. Those wishing to understand the evolution and complexities of the ecological model more fully will find this information in the sources listed in the bibliography.

A PROCESS, NOT A METHOD OR CONTENT

A Family-Centered Approach is a PROCESS for delivering services to families that will fit many different "content areas", be it support for teen parents, family literacy or education for low-income children. It is not a set of particular practices but rather a "philosophy" in which families are recognized as having unique concerns, strengths and values. A Family- Centered Approach represents a paradigm shift away from deficit- based, medical models that discover, diagnose and treat "problems" in families to an ecological model. The ecological model which is the theoretical foundation for a Family-Centered Approach, is described below. It views families from the perspective of "a half-full cup" rather than half empty. This approach builds and promotes the strengths that families already have. The key components of a Family-Centered Approach are:

- **Creating partnerships and helping relationships.** Families are supported and child development is enhanced through helping and partnership relationships.
- **Building the community environment.** Families gain information, resources and support through their connections to the community environment.
- **Linking families and community support**. Participation, two-way communication, and advocacy strengthen both the community support network and family functioning.

The ecological paradigm is still emerging. It represents a integration of research and theory from developmental psychology and sociology, with experiential knowledge from social work, family support, early intervention and early childhood education. It represents a coalescing of what researchers are learning about the way different social environments and relationships influence human development. Because it is a new model with many as yet unexplained elements, the ecological model is still in a state of flux. However, the basic tenets of the ecological model have been established for some time and can be stated as:

- Human development is viewed from a person-in-environment perspective.
- The different environments individuals and families experience shape the course of development.
- Every environment contains risk and protective factors that help and hinder development.
- Influence flows between individuals and their different environments in a two-way exchange. These interactions form complex circular feedback loops.
- Individuals and families are constantly changing and developing. Stress, coping and adaptation are normal developmental processes.

(adapted from Whittaker & Tracy, 1989, p. 49-51)

KEY CONCEPTS OF AN ECOLOGICAL MODEL

INTRODUCTION

A focus on the individual, isolated and independent, is deeply embedded in our culture and values. In contrast, an ecological model emphasizes the interconnections of events and the bi-directionality of effects between organism and environment. An ecological perspective views human development from a person-in-environment context, emphasizing the principle that all growth and development take place within the context of relationships. Thus, a child must be studied in the context of the family environment and the family must be understood within the context of its community and the larger society. The language of the ecological model provides a sharp contrast to the image of the lone frontiersman pulling himself up by his bootstraps, the "paddle my own canoe" mentality upon which our legal, educational, and social service delivery system are often based.

THE FAMILY AS A SYSTEM

From an ecological perspective, the most logical model of a family is a system. While there are critics of this conceptualization (Hinde, 1989), most researchers now approach the family from what could be loosely called a "systems perspective" (Kreppner & Lerner, 1989). A systems approach to human development considers the way relationships within the family and between the family and social environment influence individual development and family functioning.

Systems theory has guiding principles that apply to all kinds of systems including business and industry, community organizations schools and families. These principles are helpful in understanding how families function and how families and communities interact. Some principles of systems relevant to a Family-Centered Approach are:

- **Interdependence**. One part of the system cannot be understood in isolation from the other parts. Children cannot be understood outside the context of their families. Any description of a child has to consider the two-way patterns of interaction within that child's family and between the family and its social environment. Describing individual family members does not describe the family system. A family is more than the sum of its parts.
- **Subsystems**. All systems are made up of subsystems. Families subsystems include spousal subsystem, parent-child subsystems and sibling subsystems. A family's roles and functions are defined by its subsystems (Fine 1992; Stafford & Bayer, 1993, Walsh, 1982).
- **Circularity.** Every member of a system influences every other member in a circular chain reaction. A family system is constantly changing as children develop; thus it is almost impossible to know for certain the causes of behavior.
- **Equifinity.** The same event leads to different outcomes and a given outcome may result from different events. What this suggests is that there are many paths to healthy development and there is no one-best-way to raise children (Stafford & Bayer, 1993).

- **Communication.** All behavior is viewed as interpersonal messages that contain both factual and relationship information (Krauss and Jacobs, 1990).
- **Family Rules**. Rules operate as norms within a family and serve to organize family interactions (Krauss and Jacobs, 1990).
- **Homeostasis.** A steady, stable state is maintained in the ongoing interaction system through the use of family norms and a mutually reinforcing feedback loop (Krauss and Jacobs, 1990).
- **Morphogenesis.** Families also require flexibility to adapt to internal and external change. (Krauss and Jacobs, 1990).

Key Point:

A Family-Centered Approach borrows from family systems theory. Family systems theory gives us useful principles for studying children within the context of their family relationships. This framework requires us to stop operating as if children exist in isolation. Effective interventions understand and respect each family's system.

The Environments of a Family Ecology

A basic ecological premise stresses that development is affected by the setting or environment in which it occurs. The interactions within and between the different environments of a family make up the "ecology" of the family and are key elements of an ecological perspective. The environments of a family's ecology include:

- **Family**. The family performs many functions for its members essential to healthy development and mediates between the child and the other environments.
- **Informal Social Network**. A family's social network grows out of interactions with people in different settings; extended family, social groups, recreation, work. Ideally, this network of caring others shores up feelings of self-worth, mobilizes coping and adapting strategies and provides feedback and validation.
- **Community Professionals and Organizations**. A community's formal support organizations provide families with resources related to professional expertise and/or technology.
- **Society**. Social policy, culture, the economy define elements of the larger ecology that impact the way a family functions.

Environments Help or Hinder Development

A given environment may be bountiful and supportive of development or impoverished and threatening to development. Negative elements or the absence of opportunities in family, school or community environments may compromise the healthy development of children or inhibit effective family functioning. Here are examples of different environments in a child and family's ecology and their impact:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- As children move out into the world, their growth is directly influenced by the expectations and challenges from peer groups, care-givers, schools, and all the other social settings they encounter.
- The depth and quality of a family's social network is a predictor of healthy family functioning. During normal family transitions all families experience stress. Just having someone to talk to about the kids over a cup of coffee, swap child care, or offer help with projects, buffers a family from the stresses of normal family life.
- Strong linkages between families and community organizations such as schools, open channels that allow vital information and resources to flow in both directions, support families, schools, and communities.
- The work environment, community attitudes and values, and large society shape child development indirectly, but powerfully, by affecting the way a family functions.

The Ecology of a Child

When considering the ecology of a particular child, one might assess the challenges and opportunities of different settings by asking:

- In settings where the child has face-to-face contact with significant others in the family, school, peer groups, or church:
  - Is the child regarded positively?
  - Is the child accepted?
  - Is the child reinforced for competent behavior?
  - Is the child exposed to enough diversity in roles and relationships?
  - Is the child given an active role in reciprocal relationships?
- When the different settings of a child's ecology such as home-school, home-church, school-neighborhood interact:
  - Do settings respect each other?
  - Do settings present basic consistency in values?
  - Are there avenues for communication?
  - Is there openness to collaboration and partnership?
- In the parent's place of work, school board, local government, settings in which the child does not directly participate, but which have powerful impact on family functioning:
  - Are decisions made with the impact on families and children in mind?
  - Do these settings contain supports to help families balance the stresses that are often created by these settings?
- In the larger social setting where ideology, social policy, and the "social contract" are defined:
  - Are some groups valued at the expense of others (Is there sexism or racism)?

- Is there an individual or a collectivist orientation?
- Is violence a norm?

(Adapted from Garbarino, 1982)

The Ecology of a Family

We are used to thinking about the environments children experience, but the environments families encounter also contribute to child development by their impact on family functioning. In a community there may, or may not, be the resources and relationships a family needs. Within its community setting, each family fabricates its own web of support from the formal and informal resources available. A family may forge many connections, a few strong connections, or no connections at all to the community resources. These connections link families to the tangible and intangible resources of the community.

Just as the child's environment offers challenges and opportunities, community settings offer challenges and opportunities for healthy family functioning. Generalizations about family-community interactions found in the literature include:

- Rural families have few employment opportunities, lower economic well being, fewer educational opportunities and less access to health care and social services. Urban families, on the other hand, have higher crime rates, more impersonal ties, higher density, and noisier living conditions (Unger & Sussman, 1990).
- Many parents must cope with the threat of violent crime in their neighborhood. A family's response to demands and challenges from a community environment may promote or hinder family functioning and child development. Withdrawing emotionally, keeping children inside, and restricting child activity are coping strategies parents use when faced with violence in their neighborhood, but they may also impede normal development. (Garbarino & Kostelney, 1993).
- Families are affected by how responsive community organizations are to family needs. Powell (1990) identifies five strategies that make early childhood programs more responsive to families. These include: increasing parent-program communication; giving parents choices between different programs; assessing family and child needs; redefining staff roles and using community residents; and involving parents in decision-making.
- The relationship between families and their community changes and evolves over time. The needs and interests of family members change over the life span. Issues of responsiveness also change with aging and stage of development.
- "Community" may refer to relationships and social networks as well as a physical location. (Unger & Sussman, 1990) A family's informal social support network often provides services that are more accessible, culturally appropriate and acceptable than the services offered by formal support systems (Gottlieb, 1988).

A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE: GOODNESS OF THE FIT MODEL

An ecological perspective focuses on dynamic developmental processes including the way stress, coping and adaptation contribute to development. A useful concept for understanding this view of development is the "goodness of the fit" model. This model suggests healthy development and effective functioning depend on the match between the needs and resources of a child or family and the demands, supports and resources offered by the surrounding environment. The developing individual responds to the "environmental fit" through developmental processes associated with stress management, coping and adaptation.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

In terms of child development, the "goodness of fit" refers to the match between the developmental needs of children and the demands, resources and capacities of their family, school and community environments. Children adapt to specific demands and expectations from home, school and community as part of the developmental process. The attitudes, values, expectations and stereotypes other people have about how a child should be, or act, mold the child. The skills and competencies required of a child by home, school and community, also shape development. A child's behavior in the face of these demands will depend on his or her skills, resources, support and experiences (Lerner, 1993).

The behaviors expected of a child at home may be different than those a child's needs at school. It has been proposed, for instance, that differences in goals, priorities and expectations between home and school may contribute to low academic achievement of minority children (Powell, 1989; Bowman & Stott, 1994). The match between a child and home, school and community environments determines whether or not a given child is able to meet basic needs, form nurturing and supportive relationships, and develop social competence, all of which greatly influence the child's life trajectory (Lerner, 1993).

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

The "goodness of fit" model is useful for understanding how to support and strengthen families as well. Families develop too. They move through predictable developmental stages just as children do. Families must also respond to the demands and expectations from work, social groups, community institutions and the society as a whole. Stress builds when the resources and coping skills of a family are inadequate to meet the demands and expectations of the social environment. Family stress levels are a predictor of "rotten outcomes" for children. If stress increases beyond a certain point, for whatever reason, a family's ability to nurture its children decreases (Schorr, 1989).

Mismatches With The Environment

A lack of fit or a mismatch can happen between children and their family or school environments or between a family and community environment. Problem behaviors in school may often be attributed to a mismatch between a child and the expectations of the school

setting (Fine, 1992). Mismatches also happen when the home culture and values are at odds with the dominant values of the school environment. This poses a threat to the linkages between family and school. The threat is lessened when both sides are carefully respectful and recognize the importance and value of each to the child. When a mismatch occurs and a child is disruptive or a family needs outside help, it may not be due to a deficiency in the child or family. The mismatch may come from a lack of resources or support from the social environment.

Key Point:

A Family-Centered Approach incorporates the "goodness of the fit" model by seeking to understand and improve the match between the needs of children and their families with community resources and support.

BEHAVIOR AS A COMPLEX INTERACTION OF FACTORS

"When we examine the family from an ecological point of view, no one person or thing.. can be realistically identified as the 'cause' of a problem" (Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfus & Bochner, 1990, p.63). Behavior from a ecological perspective, is more complex than stimulus A causes predictable response B. The environmental demands and the reciprocal relationships between people interact with individual characteristics in complex chains of influence that define behavior. Although parents have a profound influence on the ability of the child to develop in a healthy, competent manner, children also influence their parents' behavior. As Adolph Adler observed, "The child is the artist as well as the painting." Therefore, when dealing a child's acting out behavior, or addressing a family's financial need, professionals need to consider not only the individual but also contributing factors from the environment and interpersonal relationships.

Key Point:

A Family-Centered Approach seeks to strengthen family functioning. To do this, the factors contributing to the way a family functions need to be studied and understood.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY: RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Risk is a statistical concept used to predict the probability of negative outcomes. Resiliency and protective factors are the positive side of vulnerability and risk (Werner 1990). Risk and protective factors are found both within the child (temperament, physical constitution, intelligence, education) and/or within a child's environment (caring adults, high expectations, good schools, high crime levels)

A child or family's developmental trajectory results from the negotiation of risks on one hand, and the exploitation of opportunities on the other. A way to conceptualize these interactions is to think of an ever changing equation containing plus and minus numbers. At any given

75 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

time two or more numbers may combine to bolster development in a positive direction or push development toward negative outcomes. If the "solution" of the equation were graphed repeatedly, over time, it would represent the life trajectory of an individual. For example, perhaps biology contributes to a child's high intellectual potential. This should set the course of the child's development in a positive direction. This potential could be unrealized or move the child in a negative direction if a school setting failed to provide an appropriate educational experience leading the child to drop out of school. We know the following about risk and protective factors:

- The presence of a single risk factor typically does not threaten positive development. In situations where a child is vulnerable, the interaction of risk and protective factors determines the course of development.
- If multiple risk factors accumulate and are not offset by compensating protective factors, healthy development is compromised (Schorr, 1989; Werner & Smith 1992).
- Poverty increases the likelihood that risk factors in the environment will not be offset by protective factors (Schorr, 1989).
- When a child faces negative factors at home, at school, and in the neighborhood the negative effect of these factors is multiplied rather than simply added together (Werner & Smith, 1992; Schorr, 1989).
- Resiliency studies explain why two children facing similar risks develop differently. A core of dispositions and sources of support, or protective factors, that can buttress development under adverse conditions have been identified (Benard, 1991; Bogenschneider, Small & Riley; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1990, 1992).
- Dispositions that act as protective factors include an active, problem-solving approach and a sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Resilient children are characterized by a belief in their power to shape and have an impact on their experience.
- Caring and support, high expectations, and opportunities for participation are protective factors for children found in families, schools and communities (Benard, 1991).

Protective Factors

Protective factors reduce the effects of risk and promote healthy development. Protective factors influence the way a person responds to a risk situation. The protective factor is not a characteristic of the person or the situation, but a result of the interaction between the two in the presence of risk. The presence of protective factors helps to change a developmental trajectory form a negative direction to one with a greater chance of positive outcome. Following are some examples of the ways protective processes redirect a developmental trajectory:

- If a child with a genetic disability has supportive nurturing caregivers, the developmental impact of the disability is reduced (Shonkoff & Meisels, 1990).

- A teen mother's strong social support network reduces risks to the mother-child relationship (Schorr, 1989).
- If a child has one strong parent-child relationship, the risk associated with marital discord is reduced (Rutter, 1987).

Application To A Family-Centered Approach

Knowledge of risks and protective factors is used in a Family-Centered Approach to promote the enhancement of nurturing environments for children in families, schools and communities. Rutter (1987) identifies four mediating mechanisms. These mechanisms act in ways which:

- Reduce the impact of risks;
- Reduce negative chain reactions;
- Maintain self-esteem and self-efficacy through relationships and task achievement;
- Open opportunities for positive development.

A word needs to be said here about emphasizing "prevention" or "promotion" approaches. Much of our thinking about how to work with families has been dominated by a treatment, prevention and promotion continuum. The continuum ranges from:

- **Treatment**: eliminate or reduce existing dysfunction (a deficit-based approach) to
- **Prevention**: protect against or avoid possible dysfunction (a weakness-based approach) to
- **Promotion**: optimize mastery and efficacy (a strength-based approach) (Dunst, Trivette & Thompson 1990).

A Family-Centered Approach rejects the treatment model in favor of a blending of prevention and promotion models. It uses strength-based, non-deficit strategies to strengthen and support family functioning.

THE ECOLOGICAL MODEL: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

As is often the case, while the research substantiating the ecological model was slowly gathering, practitioners began to build programs that operationalized the model. Head Start, early intervention and family support programs were the first generation of programs to translate the ecological perspective into practice.

The key components of a Family-Centered Approach; creating helping and partnership relationships, building the community environment, and linking community resources, grow out of the experiences of these early programs. The first applications of the ecological perspective in programs for families resulted in:

- Recognition of the strengths and capabilities of families;
- A redefinition of the parent-professional relationship toward greater collaboration and partnership with parents;

- Service delivery practices blurring the traditional boundaries between social welfare, physical and mental health, and education.

The following description of program contributions from Head Start, early intervention family support programs, and public schools gives a very brief overview of how the ecological paradigm translates into practices. The exercises and activities of the Working Respectfully with Families Workshops will explore these lessons and applications to enhance the collaboration of parents, schools, and social services.

HEAD START PROGRAMS

Based on evidence of the critical importance of early childhood, Head Start programs created a new model of support for the young child. During its 30 year history, Head Start programs have provided a model of ways to utilize protective processes to reduce the risks associated with poverty, prevent negative chain reactions that begin in early childhood and open new opportunities for children and their families. The key components of the Head Start model incorporated in a Family-Centered Approach include:

- A comprehensive approach to child development that combines health, education and social services;
- A strong emphasis on parent participation in the program services and program administration;
- A redefinition of professional roles toward greater collaboration and partnership with parents (Shonkoff & Meisels, 1990).

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Early intervention programs for children with special needs are prevention programs to: reduce the impact of risks associated with genetic and developmental handicaps; avoid negative developmental chain reactions resulting from this risk; and open opportunities for children with special needs. Responding to research (Bronfenbrenner, 1974) showing that interventions involving the family were more effective than those working with the child alone, early intervention programs redefined the relationship between families and professionals. Early intervention programs developed ways to create effective parent-professional partnerships that recognize a family's right to participate in decisions about their child as well as a family's need for information and support (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Rappaport, 1981, Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988).

Key lessons learned from early intervention programs are the important role family values and family strengths play in efforts to nurture children with special needs. Parents are no longer treated as children to be schooled by experts who know what is best for their child, but as partners with different kinds of expertise. Early intervention programs have distilled guidelines for how to build strong parent-professional partnerships. These guidelines include:

- Recognizing the knowledge and expertise parents have about their child and that child needs;

- Empowering parents, as a way to provide help and information and to increase a parent's ability to nurture children (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988).
- Negotiating a match between the family's values, needs and goals and the professional's approaches, priorities and services.

Key Point:

A Family-Centered Approach addresses strengthening families from a non-deficit orientation that builds on the strengths that all families have. The values and guidelines for a Family Centered Approach that flow from a non-deficit, strength-based orientation and are summarized in the family support section below.

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

A set of assumptions and beliefs about families and service delivery principles has evolved from the application of ecological perspectives by family support programs. A Family Centered Approach incorporates these. The program design and services of family support programs are very diverse. These programs strengthen families by offering information, resources and emotional support. Farrow, Grant, & Meltzer (1990) outline beliefs and assumptions about families that are reflected family support programs and in a Family-Centered Approach as well.

- All families need help at some time in their lives, but not all families need the same kind or intensity of support.
- A child's development is dependent upon the strength of the parent/child relationship, as well as the stability of the relationship among the adults who care for and are responsible for the child.
- Most parents want to and are able to help their child grow into healthy, capable adults.
- Parents do not have fixed capacities and needs; like their children, they are developing and changing and need support through difficult, transitional phases of life.
- Parents are likely to become better parents if they feel competent in other important areas of their lives, such as jobs, in school, and in their other family and social relationships.
- Families are influenced by the cultural values, and societal pressures in their communities (Farrow, Grant, & Meltzer, 1990, p. 14).

These beliefs and assumptions about families guide the delivery of services by family support programs. The service delivery principles of family support programs are grounded in the practical experiences of serving families and are an important part of a Family-Centered Approach. Effective services for families should reflect these family support principles.

- Programs work with whole families rather than individual family members.
- Programs provide services, training and support that increase a family's capacity to manage family functions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Programs provide services, training and support that increase the ability of families to nurture their children.
- The basic relationship between program and family is one of equality and respect; the program's first priority is to establish and maintain this relationship as the vehicle through which growth and change can occur.
- Parents are a vital resource; programs facilitate parents' ability to serve as resources to each other, to participants in program decisions and governance, and to advocate for themselves in the broader community.
- Programs are community-based, culturally and socially relevant to the families they serve; programs are often a bridge between families and other services outside the scope of the program.
- Parent education, information about human development, and skill building for parents are essential elements of every program.
- Programs are voluntary; seeking support and information is viewed as a sign of family strength rather than as an indication of difficulty. (adapted from Carter, 1992)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Traditionally, public schools have not had a strong emphasis on family involvement and support. Schools of education have typically offered little direct training in forming parent/teacher relationships. A 1987 University of Minnesota report on improving teacher education listed what researchers identified as the thirty-seven most important teaching skills; learning how to work with parents was not among them (Louv, 1992). However, a number of factors have contributed to the current focus on parental involvement as a way to improve educational outcomes for all children, particularly children from low-income families.

During the last 20 years, vast economic and demographic changes have resulted in increased economic hardship and stress for many families and an accompanying pressure on schools to increase our nation's competitiveness in a global economy. There is growing recognition that fostering "readiness" for kindergarten and for succeeding educational environments will require addressing the strengths and needs of the whole child. The National Education Goals Panel endorsed a complex, multifaceted definition of readiness, which includes physical well-being and motor development, social competence, approaches toward learning, language and literacy, cognitive development, and general knowledge (NEGP, 1994). This comprehensive definition requires a new approach to schooling, one which includes a shared responsibility for children's development and "will likely permanently alter the school's relationship with families and communities" (Kagan, 1992, p. 8).

Recognizing the vital role that parents play in their children's education, Title IV of the National Education Goals 2000: Education America Act encourages and promotes parents' involvement in their children's education, both at home and at school. Three decades of research have demonstrated strong linkages between parental involvement in education and school achievement (Riley, 1994). Family involvement is highest among middle-and upper-class families. However, regardless of parents' education, parental involvement with children's schooling is associated with better attendance, higher achievement test scores, and

stronger cognitive skills. In addition, when parents help elementary school children with their schoolwork, social class and education become far less important factors in predicting the children's academic success (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Low-income, minority, and limited-English proficient parents, however, may face numerous barriers when they attempt to collaborate with schools. These include: lack of time and energy; language barriers, feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem, lack of understanding about the structure of the school and accepted communication channels, cultural incongruity, race and class biases on the part of school personnel, and perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators (Fruchter, et. al., 1992; SREB, 1994).

Given these potential barriers, it is not surprising that research has demonstrated that successful parent involvement programs must have a strong component of outreach to families. Studies show that school practices to encourage parents to participate in their children's education are more important than family characteristics, such as parent education, socioeconomic and marital status (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). A 1988 study of parental involvement in schools concluded that it wasn't parents who were hard for schools to reach, but schools that were hard for parents to reach (Davies, 1994). If schools are to become places where families feel welcome and recognized for their strengths and potential (Riley, 1994), school personnel must not only embrace the concepts of partnership and parent involvement, they must be given training and support to translate their beliefs into practice (Epstein, 1992).

While traditional forms of family involvement have focused on the supposed deficits of low-income and/or minority families, new models, congruent with the Family-Centered Approach advocated in this paper, emphasize building on family strengths and developing partnerships with families, based on mutual responsibility. In these approaches, parents are involved as peers and collaborators, rather than clients. Fruchter, et al. (1992), have identified four tenets of programs which have been shown to improve the educational outcomes for all children, particularly those of low-income and minority children: a) Parents are children's first teachers and have a life-long influence on children's values, attitudes, and aspirations; b) Children's educational success requires congruence between what is taught at school and the values expressed in the home; c) Most parents, regardless of economic status, educational level, or cultural background, care deeply about their children's education and can provide substantial support if given specific opportunities and knowledge; and d) Schools must take the lead in eliminating, or at least reducing, traditional barriers to parent involvement.

SUMMARY

This paper has presented the theoretical and experiential background of a Family-Centered Approach to delivering services to families. A Family-Centered approach is grounded in the research and theories of an ecological paradigm and shares many of the values and principles of Head Start, early intervention and family support programs. Specific implications and application of the key components of a family guided approach focusing on relationships, environments and linkages will be explored and discussed in depth during five workshop sessions.

The training sessions for a Family Centered Approach include the following two and a half hour sessions:

WORKSHOP I:	THE CHILD, THE FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY
WORKSHOP II:	DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES
WORKSHOP III:	CREATING FAMILY-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS
WORKSHOP IV:	HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

DRAFT 2/96

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benard, B. (1991). ***Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in The Family, Schools, and Community*** Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Bogenschneider, K., Small, S., Riley, D. ***An Ecological, Risk-Focused Approach For Addressing Youth At Risk Issues.*** Washington D.C.: National 4-H Center

Bowman, B.T., & Stott, F. M. (1994). ***Understanding Development In A Cultural Context: The Challenge For Teachers*** in B. Mallory & R. New (Eds.), *Diversity and Developmentally Appropriate Practices*. New York: Teachers College Press

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1974). ***Is Early Intervention Effective? A Report On Longitudinal Evaluations Of Preschool Programs***. Washington, D.C.: Office of Child Development, Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Davies, D. (1994). ***"But These Parents Just Aren't Interested:" The League of Schools Reaching Out*** *Family Resource Coalition*, 13 (1, 2), 9-11

Dunst, C., Trivette, C. Thompson, R. (1990). ***Supporting And Strengthening Family Functioning: Toward A Congruence Between Principles And Practice*** in Unger, D., Sussman, M.B. (Eds.), *Families in Community Settings: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: Haworth Press.

Dunst, C., Trivette, C., Deal, A. (1988). ***Enabling & Empowering Families: Principles & Guideline for Practice***. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

Epstein, J. L. (1992). ***School And Family Partnerships.*** Baltimore: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). ***School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring For The Children We Share*** *Phi Delta Kapan*, May, 701-711.

Epstein, J., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). ***School Programs And Teacher Practices Of Parent Involvement In Inner-City Elementary And Middle Schools*** in *Elementary School Journal*, January.

Farber, E., & Egeland, B. (1987). ***Invulnerability Among Abused And Neglected Children*** in E. J. Anthony, & B. Cohler (Eds.), *The Invulnerable Child* (pp. 253-288).

Farrow, F. Grant, T. Meltzer, J. (1990). ***Challenges And Opportunities For Public Policies On Family Support And Education*** in *Helping Families Grow Strong New Directions in Public Policy*. Papers from the Colloquium on Public Policy and Family Support April 1990. Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Fine, M. (1992). ***A Systems-Ecological Perspective On Home-School Intervention*** in Fine, M. and Carlson, C. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Family-School Interventions: A Systems Perspective*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Fruchter, N., Galletta, A., & White, J.L. (1992). ***New Directions In Parent Involvement***. Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development.

Garbarino, J. (1982). ***Children and Families in the Social Environment***. New York: Aldine Publishing Company.

Garbarino, J. Kostelny, K. (1993). **Neighborhood And Community Influences On Parenting** in Luster, T. Okagaki, L. (Eds.), *Parenting: An Ecological Perspective*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawerence Erlbaum Associates.

Gottlieb, B. Ed. (1988). ***Marshaling Social Support: Formats, Process, and Effects***. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Hinde, R. (1989). ***Reconciling The Family Systems And The Relationships Approaches To Child Development*** in Kreppner, K. and Lerner, R. (Eds.), *Family Systems and Life-Span Development*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kagan, S. L. (1992). ***Young Children And Education: First . . . At Last***. *Principal*, 71(5), 6-9.

Kreppner, K. and Lerner, R. (1989). Family systems and the life span development : ***Issues And Perspectives***. In Kreppner, K. and Lerner, R. (Eds.), *Family Systems and Life-Span Development*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lerner, J. (1993). ***The Influence Of Child Temperamental Characteristics On Parent Behaviors***. In Luster, T. Okagaki, L. (Eds.), *Parenting: An Ecological Perspective*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Louv, R. (1992). *Childhood's Future*. New York: Doubleday.

Melson, G. (1983). ***Family Adaptation To Environmental Demands*** in McCubbin H. and Figley, C. (Eds.), *Stress and the Family*. New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers.

National Education Goals Panel (1992). *Report of the Technical Planning Subgroup on Goal 1*. Unpublished paper.

Powell, D. (1990). ***The Responsiveness Of Early Childhood Initiatives To Families: Strategies And Limitations***. In Unger, D and Sussman, M.B. (Eds.), *Families in Community Settings: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: Haworth Press.

Powell, D.R. (1989). *Families and Early Childhood Programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Rappaport, J. (1981). ***In Praise Of Paradox: A Social Policy Of Empowerment Over Prevention***. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 9(1):1-21. Plenum Publishing Company.

Riley, R. (1994). ***Strong Families, Strong Schools***. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Rutter, M. (1987). ***Psychosocial Resilience And Protective Mechanisms***. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 57 (3): 361-331.

Schorr, L.B. (1989). ***Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage***. New York: Doubleday.

Shonkoff, J. and Meisels, S. (Eds.), (1990). ***Early Childhood Intervention: Evolution Of A Concept***. *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention*. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press.

Southern Regional Educational Board (1994). ***Getting Schools Ready For Children***. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Educational Board.

Stafford, L. Bayer, C. (1993). ***Interaction Between Parents And Children***. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Unger, D, Sussman, M. (Eds.), (1990). *Families in Community Settings: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: Haworth Press.

Walsh F. (1982). *Normal Family Processes*. New York: Guilford Press.

Werner, E. (1990). ***Protective Factors and Individual Resilience***. Shonkoff, J. and Meisels, S. J. (Eds.), *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention*. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press.

Werner, E. Smith R. (1992). ***Overcoming The Odds: High-Risk Children From Birth To Adulthood***. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Whittaker, J. Tracy E. (1989). ***Social Treatment: An Introduction to Interpersonal Helping in Social Work Practice.*** New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfus & Bochner, R. (1990). ***Understanding Family Communication.*** Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Tips for Trainers

Generic Tips

- Arrive at least 20 minutes ahead of time to set up room and check equipment.
- Develop your agenda and provide a copy for all participants.
- Find out as much as possible about who your audience is and some background on their community—demographics, areas of strength and concern.
- Remind participants that it is their workshop and that their enthusiastic participation is essential. Sharing expertise and experience is critical to the success of the workshop.
- Listen carefully and respectfully. Acknowledge what people say even if you don't agree.
- Collect stories. Illustrate points with real-life examples, when appropriate.
- No one person has all the answers. Utilize the expertise of the group.
- If a group isn't working well together, it may help to recombine.
- When appropriate:

    Use humor

    Share personal experiences

Tips Specific to These Workshops

- Be very familiar with the concepts in the background paper, "The Ecology of the Family: A Background Paper for a Family-Centered Approach to Education and Social Service Delivery"
- Keep families at the center. Emphasize the role of the family.
- Be sure to give examples from both social services and education.
- Emphasize promotion, prevention approaches, building on strengths.
- Review family stories. Be familiar with all perspectives.
- You will receive materials for participant packets. Some time will be needed to place materials in the notebooks.

Resources for Trainers

The Change Process

Senge, P.M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* NY: Doubleday.

School Reform

Fullan, M.G. (1991). *The new meaning of change.* NY: College Press.

Fullan, M.G. (1993). *Changing Forces: Probing the depths of educational reform.* Bristol, PA: Falmer.

Leithwood, K.A. (1992). The move toward transformational leadership. *Educational Leadership*, February.

Lieberman, A., ed. *The work of restructuring schools; building from the ground up.* NY: Teachers College Press.

Meier, D. (1995). How our schools could be. *Phi Delta Kappan*, January.

Meier, D. (1995). *The power of their ideas. Lessons for America from a small school in Harlem.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Newman, F.M. (1993). What is a restructured school? *Principal*, January.

Sykes, M.R. (1994). Creating a climate for change in a major urban school system. *Young Children*, November.

Tye, K. (1992). Restructuring our schools: Beyond the rhetoric. *Phi Delta Kappan*, September.

Family Support and Family/Professional Collaboration

Adams, P., & Nelson, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Reinventing human services: Community- and family-centered practice.* National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice.

Boyer, E.L. (1991). *Ready to learn: A mandate for the nation.* Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Bruner, C. (1991). *Thinking collaboratively: Ten questions and answers to help policy makers improve children's services.* Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium.

Carnegie Task Force. (1994). *Starting points: Meeting the needs of our youngest children.* NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Family Resource Coalition Report. (1994). *Building Bridges: Supporting Families Cross Service Systems.* 13(3 & 4).

Goetz, K., & Peck, S. (Eds.). (1994). The basics of family support: A guide for state planners (and others). Chicago, IL: Family Resource Coalition.

Kagan, S.L. (1991). *United we stand: Collaboration for child care and early childhood services.* NY: Teachers College Press.

Melaville, A., Blank, M.J., & Asayesh, G. *Together we can: A guide for crafting a profamily system of education and human services.* (Available from Superintendents of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954.)

National Task Force on School Readiness. (1991). *Caring communities: Supporting young children and families.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

Schorr, L.B. (1989). *Within our reach; breaking the cycle of disadvantage.* NY: Doubleday.

Werner, E., & Smith, R. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood.* Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994). *Strong families. Strong schools. Building community partnerships for learning.* U.S. Department of Education.

Group Leadership

Braun, L.A., Coplon, J.K., & Sonnenschein, P.C. (1984). *Helping parents in groups: A leader's handbook.* Boston, MA: Wheelock College

Ettington, E. (1989). *Winning Trainers.* Gulf Publishing.

THE COMMUNITY

IS PARENT

TO THE FAMILY.

(James Garbarino)

YOUR INFORMAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS